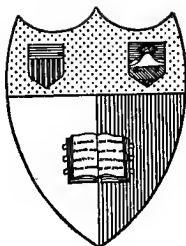


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TIME AND TRUTH

RECONCILING

**The Moral and Religious World**

TO

**SHAKESPEARE.**

## Bones for Shakespeare's Depreciators to Pick.

The name of Shakespeare is the greatest in our literature — it is the greatest in all literature — not *Homer's self* such matchless laurels won! Sweetest Shakespeare is the *Poet of the World*; the mighty master of the Soul! His anatomy of the human heart is delineated from Nature — not from *Metaphysics*. If human nature were quite destroyed, and no monument left of it except his Works, other Beings might learn what *Man* was, from those writings. Our inimitable Shakespeare, the Genius of our Isle, the man whom Nature self had made, to mock herself, was not of an Age, but, for all Time; the chief of *Posts hitherto*: what draughts of nature! what a variety of originals! everything in him is in unmeasured abundance and unequalled perfection — fresh to all ages! the consummate union of the beautiful and the good — the photographic transmission of the created world, both animate and inanimate. *Pride of his own, and wonder of this Age*, Shakespeare unlocked man's heart; disdained to sacrifice justice and the truth of nature, to any time-serving expediency; the teacher of all good: there never was a Poet who had such sublime beauties, so great a variety of beauties, or so great a number of beauties, as Shakespeare; reade him, therefore, and againe and againe; and if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to understand him. His Dramas are not only moral, but religious, in the highest meaning of that word; affording evidence of his mind having been deeply imbued with the pure morality of the Gospel: he never renders that amiable which religion and reason teach us to detest, or clothes impurity in the garb of virtue; the man who has not read Shakespeare, ought to have public-prayers put up for him! In respect of Shakespeare's great sense, Aristophanes's best wit, is but buffoonery; and, in comparison of Aristophanes's freedoms, Shakespeare writes with the purity of a vestal. Shakespeare prized sincerity in religion, and respected it as a thing too sacred to be touched by the shafts of ridicule; never threw down the boundaries between vice and virtue: Shakespeare but wrote the play the Almighty made; the tendency of his works is universally of the highest moral character, and they abound with the highest possible wisdom, namely, Christian philosophy — for, the Poetry of Shakespeare was inspiration indeed! Master of the human heart, Shakespeare wants no light but his own; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards and found her there; he had none to imitate and was himself inimitable, always varied never mannered — an Exception to all rules. It is to Shakespeare that Woman owes the popular elevation of the Feminine character, by the most matchless delineation of its purity, its faith, its disinterestedness, its tenderness, its heroism, its union of intellect and sensibility. The mind of Shakespeare was a magic mirror, in which all human nature's possible forms and combinations were present, intuitively and inherently — not conceived, but, as connatural portions of his own humanity — he was, certainly, one of the greatest Moral-philosophers that ever lived! There was a time when the art of Jonson was set above the divinest raptures of Shakespeare; the present age is well-convinced of the mistake: and now, the genius of Shakespeare is idolized in its turn; happily, for the public taste, it can scarcely be too much so. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other Poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare.

### List of the preceding cloud of Witnesses.

1 Hallam	16 Shaw (Professor)	31 Young (Rev. Dr.)
2 Seward	17 Clarke (Cowden)	32 Raakin
3 Milton	18 Mallet	33 Pope
4 Campbell (Tho.)	19 Miller (Rare Tom)	34 Symmons (Rev. Dr.)
5 Mitford (Miss)	20 Jameson (Mrs.)	35 Gifford
6 Griffith (Mrs.)	21 <i>Retrospective Review</i>	36 Dryden
7 Lyttelton (Lord)	22 Sherlock (Rev. M.)	37 Dennis
8 Addison	23 Heminge & Condell	38 Fisher (Archdeacon)
9 Fenton	24 Tweddell	39 Brongham (Lord)
10 Spenser (Edmund)	25 Price (Rev. Thomas)	40 Knight (Charles)
11 Jonson (Ben)	26 Coleridge	41 <i>Quarterly Review</i>
12 Carlyle (Thomas)	27 Clarke (Rev. Dr. Adam)	42 Montagu (Mrs.)
13 Theobald	28 Warburton (Bishop)	43 Hurd (Bishop)
14 Jeffrey (Lord)	29 Fox (Rev. W. J.)	44 Johnson (Dr.)
15 Diggès	30 Procter	

*Drake*

**Who is the man that now dares to condemn Shakespeare?**



TIME AND TRUTH  
reconciling  
THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS WORLD  
to  
SHAKESPEARE;  
the greatest  
Poet and Dramatist,  
the greatest  
Moral-philosopher and Philanthropist,  
that ever liv'd in the tide of times:  
whose greatness,  
like an Alpine-avalanche,  
continues  
increasing and increasing and increasing,  
as the wonderful revelations of his overwhelming  
Genius  
roll down the steep of time!

*May, 1854.*  
Age cannot wither him, nor Custom stale  
His infinite variety; other writers cloy  
The appetites they feed, but, He makes hungry  
Where most he satisfies.

---

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# TIME AND TRUTH

RECONCILING

The MORAL and RELIGIOUS World

TO

SHAKESPEARE.

---

London, 22 Feb. 1854.

## CHAPTER I.

*The Writings of Shakespeare constitute a Species  
of Study in themselves.*

The proper Study of mankind, is — Man; POPE.  
and what think you, gentle Reader, of the man Shakespeare?  
who has been more highly lauded and more deeply censured  
than any other man in the annals of our literature. Have  
you read him? and *how*? with your own eyes? or, through  
the spectacles of other men? with the exercise of your own  
understanding? or, prejudiced with the whims, notions, and  
opinions of his editors, commentators, and critics? He was  
“not in the roll of common men;”

He was a man, take him for all in all,  
*Eye* shall not look upon his like again: *Hamlet*.  
consequently, He is one of the fittest subjects for his  
countrymen’s contemplation.

Soule of the Age!  
The applause, delight, the wonder of the Stage,  
My Shakespeare rise! I will not lodge Thee by  
Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye  
A little further, to make Thee a roome:  
Thou art a moniment without a tombe;  
And art aliue still, while thy Booke doth liue  
And we have wits to read and praise to giue!

BEN IONSON. Folio ed. of Shakespeare, 1623.

The myriad-minded Shakespeare was the Daguerreotype  
of Mankind; and were you to peruse a hundred Essays on  
Shakespeare, you would assuredly read as many essentially  
different discourses; because, Shakespeare is a different

writer to every different reader: he is not to me, what he is to you; there are not two individuals who think similarly of him; he strikes every intelligent mind, yet, he strikes not two alike.

### Different minds

Incline to different objects; one pursues  
 The vast alone, the wonderful, the wild;  
 Another sighs for harmony, and grace,  
 And gentlest beauty. Hence, when lightning fires  
 The arch of heaven, and thunders rock the ground;  
 When furious whirlwinds rend the howling air,  
 And ocean, groaning from his lowest bed,  
 Heaves his tempestuous billows to the sky —  
 Amid the mighty uproar, while below  
 The nations tremble, Shakespeare looks abroad,  
 From some high cliff superior, and enjoys  
 The elemental war! *Pleasures of Imagination.*

From this passage, we learn the impression which Shakespeare had made on the mind of Akenside; how different to the impress made on the mind of Milton, who wrote of

Sweetest Shakespeare, *fancy's* child,  
 Warbles his native wood-notes wild! *L' Allegro.*

and how different these, to the impression struck on the mind of his well-meaning Defender against the "Misrepresentations of Voltaire —

We are apt to consider Shakespeare, only as a Poet;  
 but, he is certainly one of the greatest Moral-philosophers that ever lived. *ELIZABETH MONTAGU.*

An impression the very reverse of this, seems to have been stamped on the pusillanimous mind of Bell, the *anonymous* biographer of Shakespeare, in Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia; for, he roundly asserts —

Shakespeare had no moral purpose in view; "he sacrifices virtue to convenience." To *please* was his great object; he paid no attention to that retributive justice, which, when human affairs are rightly understood, pervades them all. *Lives of eminent men*, p. 128.

"Ye gods, it doth amaze me!"

But, in his clever little volume, published in 1852, George Tweddell more advisedly writes—

What a fine Philosophy pervades each of his dramas!  
 and weak indeed must be the penetration of the man,

who can discover *no high moral purpose* running, like veins of silver in the earth, through *all* the writings of Shakespeare. We need not envy the soul, that has never felt its self-reliance strengthened, by a perusal of these immortal dramas. They are not only moral, but *religious*, in the highest meaning of that word.

*Shakespeare: his Times and Cotemporaries.*

In his once much admired History of England (which has for some time been gradually falling to its proper level) Hume has expressed his *unphilosophical* notions regarding the Plenipotentiary of the human race, in the following derogatory terms —

If Shakespeare be considered as a *Man*, born in a rude age, and educated in the lowest manner, without any instruction, either from the world or from books, he may be regarded as a prodigy; if represented as a *Poet*, capable of furnishing a proper entertainment to a refined or intelligent audience, we must abate much of this eulogy. In his compositions, we regret that many irregularities, and even absurdities, should so frequently disfigure the animated and passionate scenes intermixed with them; and, at the same time, we, perhaps, admire the more those beauties, on account of their being surrounded with such deformities. A striking peculiarity of sentiment, adapted to a single character, he frequently hits, as it were, by inspiration; but, *a reasonable propriety of thought*, he cannot for any time uphold. Nervous and picturesque expressions, as well as descriptions, abound in him; but, it is in vain we look either for purity or simplicity of diction. His total ignorance of all theatrical art and conduct, however material a defect, yet, as it affects the spectator rather than the reader, we can more easily excuse than that *want of taste* which often prevails in his productions, and which gives way, only by intervals, to the irradiation of genius. A great and fertile genius he certainly possessed, and one enriched equally with a tragic and comic vein; but, he ought to be cited as a proof, how dangerous it is to rely on these advantages alone, for attaining an excellence in the finer arts. And there may even remain a suspicion, that we overrate, *if possible*, the greatness of his genius; in the same manner, as bodies often

appear more gigantic, on account of their being disproportioned and misshapen.

But, in Hallam (a man of deeper penetration and sounder judgement [not *judgment*] than Hume) we read —

Shakespeare was, as I believe, conversant with the better class of English literature, which the reign of Elizabeth afforded.

The name of Shakespeare is the greatest in *our* literature — it is the greatest in *all* literature. No man ever came near to him in the *creative* powers of the mind; no man had ever such strength at once, and such variety of imagination.

The number of characters in his plays, is astonishingly great, without reckoning those, who, although transient, have often their individuality *all distinct*, all types of human-life, in well-defined differences. He leaves far behind, not the dramatists alone, but all writers of fiction. Compare with him Homer — the tragedians of Greece — the poets of Italy — Plautus, Cervantes, Moliere, Addison, Lesage, Fielding, Richardson, Scott — the romancers of the elder or later schools — *one* man has far more than surpassed them *all*. Others may have been as *sublime*, others may have been more *pathetic*, others may have equalled [properly *equaled*] him in *grace* and *purity of language*, and have shunned some of his faults; but, the *philosophy* of Shakespeare, his intimate searching out of the human heart, whether in the gnomic form of sentence, or in the dramatic exhibition of character, is a gift peculiarly *his own*.

If originality of invention did not so much stamp almost every play of Shakespeare, that to name *one* as the most original, seems a disparagement to others, we might say, that his great prerogative of genius was exercised above all in *Lear*.

Yet, there are those who still affect to speak of Shakespeare as a *barbarian*; and others, who, giving what they think due credit to his *genius*, deny him all judgment [better *judgement*] and *dramatic taste*. A comparison of his works with those of his contemporaries — and it is surely to them that we should look — will prove that his *judgment* is by no means the least of his rare qualities.

*Introduction to the Literature of Europe.*

In the works of the critical Bishop of Worcester, I read —

There was a time, when the art of Jonson was set above the divinest raptures of Shakespeare. The present age is well-convinced of the mistake. And now, the genius of Shakespeare is idolized in its turn. Happily, for the public taste, it can scarcely be too much so.

Such was the opinion of Bishop Hurd — observe now its contrast, in the following deliberately penned critique, by the Rev. Richard Cecil —

Shakespeare had a low and licentious taste. When he chose to imagine a virtuous and exalted character, he could completely throw his mind into it, and give the perfect picture of such a character. But, he is at home in Falstaff. No high, grand, virtuous, religious aim, beams forth in him. A man whose heart and taste are modelled [*modeled*] on the Bible, nauseates him in the mass, while he is enraptured and astonished by the flashes of his pre-eminent genius.

*Cecil's Remains.*

In allusion to critiques and censures similar to this, from the pen of the sincerely devout Cecil, who was not by any means singular in his notions regarding the yet but partially known Shakespeare, Rankin, in his praise-worthy little volume, has expressed himself as follows —

Some reverend writers, more zealous than wise, have gone so far as to affirm, that Shakespeare was destitute of *religious feeling* and *reverence for God*. The true friends of religion and morality must regret, that their advocates, in making such a charge, have grossly departed from *truth*. The fact is, that the profane passages occurring in our author's Plays, are either uttered by personages whom Shakespeare intends to hold up to reprobation, and in whom *piety* would destroy consistency of character; or, He manages to show, in the context, that He himself approves them not.

The faults of Shakespeare, were faults of his times; his beauties are beauties of eternity. And, in spite of the frequent occurrence of the objectionable passages, it may still be safely affirmed, that the *tendency* of his works is universally of *the highest moral character*,

and that they abound with *the highest possible wisdom* — namely, CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

*The Philosophy of Shakespeare.*

The Rev. W. J. Birch, among a variety of accusatory and condemnatory observations on the principles and sentiments of the Father of the English Drama, boldly asserts —

Shakespeare treated religion with less respect even than Marlow :

but, Procter, who was much better acquainted with both Marlow and Shakespeare than Birch is ever likely to be, assures us, that —

Marlow stands forth, the historian of *lust* and the demonstrator of *physical power*; whilst Shakespeare is ever the champion of *humanity* and *intellect*.

From this *dozen* of contradictory testimonies regarding Shakespeare, those of my readers who have not read him for themselves, must, on a little reflection, infer there is some more than ordinary cause for such wide differences of opinion amongst such accredited writers as I have quoted; there are many causes; but, I shall not attempt an enumeration: I shall simply remark, in passing, that the highest and deepest things in Shakespeare, can be properly appreciated by readers of a high moral tone *only*, fully capable of apprehending and of originating sublimely poetic things.

Gifford, in his defense of Ben Jonson against the charge of “daring profanation of the Scriptures,” writes of Shakespeare in language as strange as it is indefensible —

The fact is, that the crime which is falsely charged on the one, falls with dreadful effect upon the other. Shakespeare is, in truth, the coryphæus of profanation. Texts of Scripture are adduced by him with the most wanton levity; and, like his own Hal, he has led to *damnable iteration*. He too, let us hope, regarded his conduct, in this respect, “with horror,” though no record of it be found on earth.

*Memoir of Ben Jonson.*

As a set off against this unwarrantable accusation, by Gifford, I shall quote the opinion of the Rev. James Plumbtre, who, in his “Copious supplementary Notes” to the “Four Discourses on subjects relating to the amusement of the Stage, preached at Great St. Mary’s Church, Cambridge,” in 1808, maintains —



Scriptural *allusions* and *phrases* may be introduced with propriety; p. 158.

and immediately quotes half-a-dozen examples from Shakespeare, in support of his opinion. On p. 139, the Reverend author has shown that "the general idea of the *Tempest*, the *Shipwreck*, and the *Island*, is taken from the account of St. Paul's shipwreck on the Island of Melita, as mentioned in Acts xxvii and xxviii" — and, on p. 190, he adds —

That the most sublime doctrines of religion may be introduced on the Stage, if done with seriousness and address, the following instances, I think, will show: — quoting 6 closely printed 8vo. pages of passages from Plays, confirming his opinion — countenanced by the good Bishop Horne.

There is no scarcity of Reverend and Right Reverend authorities to justify Shakespeare's use of the language, the very phraseology of holy-writ, in his Dramas. Were it necessary, I could easily quote 100 pages of the Writings of Ministers of the Gospel, of various denominations, in justification of the frequent use made by the Father of the English Drama, of scriptural *allusions*, *words*, and *sentiments*; but, such a display would be out of place here; my present object being to show, not *similarity* but *dissimilarity* of opinions on Shakespeare.

The Rev. W. J. Fox, more as a Statesman than a Minister of Religion, has published his opinions on Shakespeare, in a series of papers; and, among other pointed remarks, tells us —

Shakespeare prized *sincerity in religion*, and respected it as a thing *too sacred* to be touched by the shafts of ridicule; but, he looked upon religion as a thing to be intirely reprobated when it assumed *the spirit of intolerance*, and interfering with temporal affairs, and with the free and natural thoughts, feelings, and habits of mankind, sought for plunder and aggrandisement. We have Shakespeare's verdict against the mixing up *ecclesiastical* and *political* authority; he shows us, that the beauty of Religion and the character of the Priest, require perfect freedom from the entanglements of party strife and the sordid ends that arise out of a connexion [better *connection*] with the State.

*Political Morality of Shakespeare's Plays.*

Lord Lyttelton has communicated his opinion of Shakespeare, in the following paragraph —

No author had ever so copious, so bold, so creative an imagination, with so perfect a knowledge of the passions, the humors, the sentiments of mankind. He painted all characters, from heroes and kings down to innkeepers and peasants, with equal truth and equal force. If *human-nature* were quite destroyed, and no monument left of it, except his works, other Beings might learn what *Man* was, from those writings.

*Dialogues of the Dead.*

And Mrs. Griffith has recorded her conceptions of those too little *studied* Dramas, in the following passage —

Shakespeare is not only my Poet, but my Philosopher also. His anatomy of the *human-heart* is delineated from nature, not from metaphysics; referring immediately to our intuitive sense, and not wandering with the schoolmen, through the pathless wilds of theory. We do not only *see*, but *feel* his dissections just and scientific.

*Morality of Shakespeare's Dramas Illustrated.*

And what says Jeffrey? a writer whose opinion, on such a subject, ought to receive respectful consideration —

More full of *wisdom* and *ridicule* and *sagacity*, than all the moralists and satirists in existence, Shakespeare is more wild, airy, and inventive, and more pathetic and fantastic, than *all* the Poets of *all* the regions and ages of the world; and has all those elements so happily mixed up in him, and bears his high faculties so temperately, that the most severe reader cannot complain of him for want of *strength* or of *reason*, nor the most sensitive for defect of *ornament* or *ingenuity*. Everything in him is in unmeasured abundance and unequalled perfection; but, everything is so balanced and kept in subordination, as not to *jostle* or *disturb* or *take the place* of one another. The most exquisite poetical conceptions, images, and descriptions, are given with such brevity and introduced with such skill, as merely to adorn without loading the sense they accompany. All his excellencies [accurately *excelences*] like those of Nature herself, are thrown out together; and, instead of interfering with, support and recommend each other.

*Critique on Hazlitt,*

Carlyle, in his rhapsodical effusions on *The Hero as a Poet*, furnishes me with the following temperate paragraph —

Of this Shakespeare of ours, perhaps, the opinion one sometimes hears a little idolatrously expressed, is, in fact, the right one; I think the best judgement — not of this country only, but of Europe at large, is slowly pointing to the conclusion, that Shakespeare is *the chief of all Poets* hitherto; the greatest intellect, who, in our recorded world, has left record of himself, in the way of Literature. On the whole, I know not such a power of vision, faculty of thought, if we take all the characters of it, in any other man. Such a calmness of depth, placid joyous strength; *all* things imaged in that great soul of his so true and clear, as in a tranquil unfathomable sea!

*Six Lectures on Heroes, &c.*

And every day is adding to the number of those readers who are disposed and prepared to subscribe to Shaw's opinion —

From the works of Shakespeare may be gleaned a complete collection of precepts, adapted to every conceivable circumstance of human affairs. The wisest and best of mankind have gone to him for maxims of *wisdom* and *goodness* — maxims, expressed with the artlessness and simplicity of a casual remark, but, pregnant with the thought of consummate experience and penetration: from him the Courtier has learned grace, the Moralist prudence, the Theologian divinity, the Soldier enterprise, the King royalty: his *wit* is unbounded, his *passion* inimitable, his *splendor* unequaled; and over all these varied glories, he has thrown *a halo of human sympathy* no less tender than his genius was immeasurable and profound — a light reflected from the most gentle, generous, loving spirit, that ever glowed within a human heart — the consummate union of the *beautiful* and the *good*!

*Outlines of English Literature.* 1849.

To this *score* of dissimilar testimonies of the impressions engraven by Shakespeare on the minds of his readers, hundreds might be added, without once quoting Foreigners; as we have Englishmen in abundance who have penned all that is commendatory and all that is condemnatory of

Shakespeare: and were I to adduce but half the divers and diverse opinions I have read on his Plays taken separately, on the numerous contested passages, on his political opinions, his moral sentiments, and his religious tenets, I should not have *hundreds* but *thousands* of extracts. It would exhaust the patience of my most patient readers, were I to quote but a tithe of the critiques which are to be found in the pages of Foreign writers on "the Genius of the British Isles" — such, for instance, as Voltaire's comment on the masterpiece of our *philosophic* poet —

*Hamlet* seems the work of a drunken Savage!

such as Buonaparte's contemptuous judgement of the great poet of Humanity, whose Dramas will be the delight of many nations, ages after the Corsican Emperor of France shall have passed into utter oblivion —

I have read Shakespeare; there is nothing that approaches Corneille and Racine. There is no possibility of reading one of his pieces through. They excite pity! As to Milton, there is nothing but his invocation to the Sun, and two or three other passages. The rest is mere rhapsody!

THIBAUDEAU'S *Memoirs of the Consulate*.

Neither am I disposed to weary my readers with the scores and hundreds of favorable and enthusiastic opinions to be met with in the works of such writers as Lessing, Tieck, Schlegel, Körner, Ulrici, Goethe, and a host of others — several of which I shall probably introduce into the following pages, as occasions may suggest the aptness of their insertion.

Now, gentle reader, though it is not necessary that You and I should think alike of Shakespeare, it is necessary, as rational beings, that we should each think for ourselves. If you think as I think, for no better reason than *because* I think so or so,

I wad nae gi'e a Button for ye! BURNS.

To confess a truth, I was prejudiced against Shakespeare from infancy. In my boyhood, I was taught to consider him a pernicious author, a man of a groveling [not *groveling*] and vicious taste, a writer of immoral Plays — in short, a notoriously bad character, who had, by his damnable writings, sent thousands of souls to Hell: but, in justice to those who taught me to think unworthily and ill of the noble-minded and beneficent Shakespeare, be it recorded —

*they had never read him* — consequently, they merely imparted to me the impressions they had received from others. I, like the generality of young folks, was not instructed *how* to think, but, *what* to think; and many years passed away, before I learned to think for myself: and, notwithstanding the progress which has been made in systematic Education since I used to sit, in the last century, hour after hour,

Sorting and puzzling with a deal of glee,

Those seeds of Science, called the *A B C*; *COWPER*. yet, it may safely be averred, that *thinking* is, even in this boastedly “enlightened age,” the least exerted privilege of cultivated humanity. They who had the superintendence of my education, conceived they did their duty fully, in striving to make me a creditable Copy of those by whom I was providentially surrounded — perhaps, it never entered their minds that I was capable of becoming a *Unit* in the world: be this as it may, I was certainly brought up as a mere Fraction of a mass, called *society*; and I am not now aware, that any one so much as attempted to make me an Individual — a *Man*. Have you, gentle reader, been better educated? if so, you have been a highly favored child of the vast family of man. Are you really a *thinker*? or, do you let others think for you? like the great bulk of mankind. Do you read and *study* Shakespeare for yourself? or, do you passively accept whatever Editors choose to print respecting him? Let me tell you, if your knowledge of Shakespeare, be but secondhand knowledge, you know him *not*, though you may have read a whole host of Commentators and Critics; for, believe me, even as Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture, so is Shakespeare the best interpreter of Shakespeare.

Had not Shakespeare been a *forbidden book* in our family, my honored Parents would quickly have discovered, that he was not only a Poet, and a Dramatist, and a Microcosm of knowledge, but that he was a Moralist, a Philosopher, and a Philanthropist, in whose inestimable writings *the principles of good and evil* are no more confounded, than they are confounded in Nature itself.

Untill I was out of my Teens, I should no more have thought of *studying* Shakespeare, than of studying the *Black-art*; and there are tens of thousands of Adults to be found at this day, in what is denominated *the Religious world*, who have not the least conception of the Treasures

which *prejudice* has locked away from them, in the ennobling pages of Shakespeare's writings—worth infinitely more than a whole library of conventional Morality and orthodox Divinity; for, it was the peculiar prerogative of the Father of the English Drama,

To hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to Nature—to  
show Virtue her own feature, Scorn her own image,  
and the very age and body of the Time his form and  
pressure: *Hamlet.*

and, despite all that ignorance and prejudice and fanaticism have issued against him, most of his reading opponents (like Aufidius the inveterate opponent of Coriolanus) have been constrained to acknowledge, at the close of whatever charge they have attempted to substantiate against him—

But, he has a *merit*

To choke it in the utterance!

Let not any one fancy, that in my expatiations upon Shakespeare, I have any sinister end in view; my object is, simply to place his writings before my countrymen and countrywomen in the broad clear light of day—to eradicate error, to irradiate truth—

“And Truth alone, where'er my lot be cast,  
In scenes of plenty, or, the pining waste,  
Shall be my end and aim, my glory to the last!”

Hence, I do not cringingly solicit the indulgence of my readers, either for Shakespeare or myself; on the contrary, I fearlessly, yet, most respectfully, dare your judgement; therefore,

Censure us in your wisdom, and awake your senses,  
that you may the better judge! *Julius Cesar.*

In this introductory chapter, I have not scrupled to place before you the *unfavorable* as well as favorable opinions of highly accredited writers — poets, critics, historians, philosophers, and divines — and if the score of dissimilar testimonies already given, have not produced the conviction, that Shakespeare is a different writer to every different reader, that his writings constitute *a species of Study in themselves*, I have bestowed much pains to very little purpose, and it behooves [not *behoves*, from *behoof*] me to apologize for having occupied so much of your time in a fruitless attempt, aptly to introduce to your better acquaintance,

That demigod,  
 Who Avon's flowery margin trod,  
 While sportive *Fancy* round him flew ;  
 When *Nature* led him by the hand,  
 Instructed him in all she knew,

And gave him absolute command ! GARRICK.

As to my private opinion, let it not sway your judgement ; have the manliness to read and think and judge for yourselves ; be not mimics, but, *men* — only give me (and every one else) leave to do the like ; for,

'Tis with our judgements as our watches, none  
 Go just alike, yet, each believes his own. POPE.

To me, Shakespeare is, what I heard that able lecturer  
 Cowden Clarke designate him, about 5 years ago, at Hull —

The photographic transmission of the created world,  
 both animate and inanimate :

and, although I cannot say, with Ben Jonson,

I lov'd the Man, and doe honour his Memory on  
 this side idolatry ;

I can most cordially say, in the playfully hyperbolic phraseology of the erudite and acute Dr. Adam Clarke —

The man who has not read Shakespeare, ought to  
 have public-prayers put up for him !



## CHAPTER II.

*Shakespeare as a Poet.*

For lofty sense,  
 Creative fancy, and inspection keen  
 Through the deep windings of the human-heart,  
 Is not wild Shakespeare thine and nature's boast?

THOMSON's *panegyric on Great Britain*. 1727.

What an exhaustless subject is Shakespeare! No other writer, ancient or modern — not even Horace, whose works have passed through 500 editions, has had so many and various Commentators as Shakespeare; nor has any other author been so highly extolled and so deeply condemned: I have heard him represented as the most exalted, and as the most debased of writers; as the quintessence of intellectuality, and as the epitome of barbarism; as a demon, and as a god! and it is owing to this *diversity of opinions*, that we never read an essay, never hear a lecture, on Shakespeare, that satisfies our desires, however much it may please, however much it may surpass our expectations — no matter whether we read Schlegel, Coleridge, or Knight; no matter whether we hear Dawson, Cooper, or Cowden Clarke, there ever is *a something* wanting; and no wonder,

None but Himself *can* be his Parallel!

consequently, to do justice to Shakespeare, Shakespeare himself should be the lecturer or essayist. Guizot remarks—

It is to adopt an entirely [*intire* if *inquire*, *entire* if *enquire*] false principle of criticism, to judge Shakespeare by himself, and to compare the impressions which he has succeeded in producing in a given style and subject, with those which he calls forth in another style and subject; as if he possessed only a special and singular merit, which he was bound to display on every occasion, and which constituted his sole title to glory. His vast and true genius, must be measured on a larger scale; we must compare Shakespeare with Nature, with the World; and in every particular case, the comparison must be made between *that portion* of the *world* and of *nature*, which it was his intention to represent, and *the picture* which he has drawn of it.



Do not expect from the painter of Brutus the same impressions and the same effects as from the delineator of King Lear, or Romeo and Juliet. Shakespeare penetrates to the utmost recesses of *all* subjects, and can derive from *each* the impressions which naturally flow from it, and the distinct and original effects which it ought to produce.

*Shakespeare and his Times.* 1852.

If, however, the essayist be well-read and honest; if true to his author, true to his reader, and true to himself, he will not rest satisfied with communicating his own views merely; he will feel himself bound to combat the errors disseminated by those who have made Shakespeare their *butt* or their *idol*: the love of Truth will impel an honest-minded essayist, to expose the poreblindedness [not *purblind*] of Shakespeare's too enthusiastic admirers, and to raise up a standard against those who have issued false accusations against him — taking for his motto, the memorable words of Othello,

Nothing extenuate,

Nor set down aught in malice.

That I have more than occasionally dipped into Shakespeare, that I have read more than a dozen volumes of critiques upon him, these pages bear testimony; and though I do not wish in anywise to subvert the opinion of any reader, nor persuade any one to adopt mine, there is not, I trust, anything unbecoming in my desiring all who peruse this little work, to give it as impartial a perusal as the *prejudice of education* may permit.

It is too much the fashion, now-a-days, for essayists and lecturers to hold Shakespeare up to their auditors and readers, as a *Model of Perfection*; as the King of Poets who could “do no wrong”; but, judging of the *man* from his *writings*, I think I have pretty solid grounds for believing, that even Shakespeare partook of the fallibility of human-nature. Notwithstanding the risk I run of being accounted *unfashionable*, I am bound to confess, *I cannot think him perfect!* nay, I venture publicly to adopt Hallam's expression — that, to be unwilling to acknowledge any faults in Shakespeare, is “an extravagance rather derogatory to the critic, than honorable to the poet.” In my judgement, Charles Knight (to whom every lover of Shakespeare owes a large tribute of thanks) has been too anxious, too fastidious, in some of his defenses of his idolized

poet, whom the enthusiastic admirer seems unwilling to admit capable of having had any failings at all. This, though a pardonable weakness, *is a weakness* — which I hope he may outlive. Shakespeare is as open to criticism and to censure, as any other writer, ancient or modern; and Knight ought to have reflected how much more difficult it is to avoid censure, than to gain applause; applause may be obtained by *one* great or wise action in an age; but, to escape censure, a man must pass his whole life without doing, or saying, or writing, a single bad or foolish thing; and, gentle reader,

Who has a breast so pure,  
But some uncleanly apprehensions  
Keep leets and law-days, and in sessions sit  
With meditations lawful? *Othello.*

Schlegel, who, confessedly, had devoted many years to the study of Shakespeare *exclusively*, and who may be said to have become saturated with his spirit, published to the world —

I will undertake to *prove*, that Shakespeare's *anachronisms* are, for the most part, committed of set purpose and designedly!

and Schlegel was such a clever fellow, and so thoroughly versed in Shakespeare, that I should not have been surprised at his accomplishing such a task. I am, however, personally acquainted with those who will attempt to prove every alleged [not *alleged*] fault in Shakespeare, an excellence or a beauty: I am not yet, quite so *beshakespeared*; I neither believe, nor wish to believe him faultless; I deem him the greatest of our Poets, the greatest of our Dramatists, the greatest of our Writers; I deem him the greatest Genius,

“That ever livèd in the tide of times:”

yet, I neither think him *perfect*, nor wish others to look upon him as faultless; I aver *he was not immaculate*! I claim for him the first place in the first rank of England's heirs of immortality: still, I do not, and cannot consider him as being without spot or blemish — No;

Defects through nature's best productions run;

Shakespeare *had* spots — and spots are in the Sun.

According to Dr. Johnson (whom I always mention with respect, never with fashionable contumely) Shakespeare was the *Poet of Nature*; according to Milton (who has not yet

received his due meed of praise) Shakespeare was the *Poet of Imagination*: to me he is both, and more than both; Shakespeare is, to me, essentially and intrinsically, the *Poet of Humanity*—he was “full o’ the milk of human-kindness;” and, though very unpopular in his day, Shakespeare instilled into his auditors the now wide-spreading doctrine of *universal brotherhood*; he taught Kings that they were *men*, and Men that they were brethren; he exhibited the nothingness of *martial-glory*; he exposed the heinousness of *ambitious conquests*; he denounced “the pride and pomp and circumstance of glorious *war*;” he branded the then fashionable vice of dueling [not *duelling*] he deprecated the monstrosities of *slavery*; he stigmatized inordinate *usury*; and he copiously poured forth his righteous indignation upon every kind of political and religious *persecution*, together with all species of *tyranny*, *cruelty*, and *oppression*—nobly inculcating those grand moral principles and heroically diffusing those civilizing and fraternizing sentiments, which (Heaven be praised) are now taking deep root in the hearts of the rising generations—the men and women of coming years.

Hume evinced his lack of discernment and taste, when he wrote disparagingly of Shakespeare *as a Poet* (see p. 3) for, if Shakespeare be *not* a Poet, where, it may be asked, is Poetry to be found? Whoever attempts to circumscribe Poetry *by a definition*, proves the narrowness of his own capacity; yet, a definition which could possibly exclude Shakespeare, cannot, I think, be made. Even Hume, insensible as he was to the *taste* and *judgement* of Shakespeare, admits—“a great and fertile *genius* he certainly possessed;” and is not *genius* that peculiar power which constitutes a Poet? that particular quality without which judgement would be cold and knowledge inert? that singular energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates? But, I shall not waste time and paper on Hume’s incapability of judging either what Poetry *is*, or, what it is *not*; I shall rather quote an author whose works prove him a *qualified* judge: and, according to Pope (whose sterling poetry has been huddled out of sight, by the loads of comparative *trash* of the present age)

If ever any author deserved the name of *original*,  
it was Shakespeare; Homer himself drew not his art  
so immediately from the fountains of Nature; it pro-

ceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or, some cast of the models of those before him — but, the poetry of Shakespeare was inspiration indeed ! He is not so much an *imitator* as an instrument of Nature; and it is not so just to say that *he speaks from her*, as that *she speaks through him*.

But who, my readers, who shall attempt to *describe* the poetry of Shakespeare ? admirable as Pope was at *description*, he did not venture to give us a delineation of the Bard of Avon's poetry ; that was beyond his skill ; nor would any description, perhaps, satisfy us fully, unless couched in the unapproachable language of the "Star of Poets" —

*Poet.* Poesy is as a gum, which oozes\* [\*not issues  
From whence 'tis nourished. The fire i' the flint  
Shows not till it be struck ; our gentle flame  
Provokes itself, and, like the current, flies  
Each bound it chafes ! *Timon of Athens.*

— when in a mood to insinuate the loveliness of the sweetest poetry,

O, it came o'er the ear, like the sweet sound\* [\*not south  
That breathes upon a bank of violets —

*Stealing and giving odor ! Twelfth Night.*

— at other times, when our tragical Titan is storming the heavens and threatening to tear the world from off its hinges, his impassioned poetry seems to hang over us

As fearfully, as doth a gall'd rock

O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,

Swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean ! *Henry V.*

— yet, this is of short duration ; with him, as with Nature, what is violent seldom lasts long ; and every now and then, the "Sweet Swan of Avon"

Makes sweet music with the enameled stones,

Giving a gentle kiss to every sedge

He overtaketh in his pilgrimage !

*Two Gent.*

— and when in a capricious vein (for "Gentle Willy," we are told, could be a "Merry Grig")

He hath done

Mad and fantastic execution,

Engaging and redeeming of himself,

With such a careless force and forceless care,

As if that Luck, in very spite of cunning,

Bade him win all !

*Troilus and Cressida.*

Such is Shakespeare's *indescribable* poetry ; infinitely superior to everything else in our language ; He is, in fact, what our North-countryman, Professor Aytoun, was constrained to declare him, notwithstanding Shakespeare was not a Scotchman —

The greatest Poet this world has ever known !

*Lecture* (in London) on 20 May, 1853.

— therefore, any attempts of mine to laud him, would be

To guard\* a title that was rich before ; [\*to ornament

To gild refin'd gold, to paint the lilly,\* [\*not lily

To throw a perfume on the violet,

To smoothe the ice, to add another hue

Unto the rainbow.

*King John.*


Even the melody of his words is astonishing ; there is nothing like it in the writings of his highly-gifted contemporaries [not *contemporaries*] many of whom were elegant scholars and giants in literature : witness the harmony between the expression and the thought, in the following exquisite description of the harmony of the spheres, by Lorenzo to Jessica —

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank !

Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music

Creep in our ears ; soft stillness and the night

Become the touches of sweet harmony.

Sit, Jessica.  Look, how the floor of heaven

Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold !

There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st

But, in his motion, like an angel sings,

Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins :\* [\*not

Such harmony is in immortal souls ; *cherubim*

But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay

Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.

*Merchant of Venice.*

If we turn to earthly things, his choice of words is not less elegant — provided the nature of his subject does not *forbid* soft language. The string of lines on *flowers*, as given by Perdita, seem enamored of their own sweetness —

Daffodils,

That come before the swallow dares, and take


The winds of March with beauty ; violets, dim,

But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,

Or, Cytherea's breath !

*Winter's Tale.*

Treating of *insects*, his words are equally appropriate; witness his fine rhetorical delineation of the effects of *subordination* in a State, beautifully illustrated from the Honey-bees —

Therefore, doth heaven divide  
 The State of man in divers functions,  
 Setting endeavor in continual motion;  
 To which is fix'd, as an aim or butt,  
*Obedience*:  for, so work the honey-bees;  
 Creatures, that, by a rule in Nature, teach  
 The act of *order* to a peopled kingdom.  
 They have a king, and officers of sorts;  
 Where some, like magistrates, correct at home;  
 Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad;  
 Others, like soldiers, arm'd in their stings,  
 Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds;  
 Which pillage, they, with merry march, bring home  
 To the tent-royal of their emperor:  
 Who, busied in his majesty, surveys  
 The singing masons building roofs of gold;  
 The civil citizens kneading up the honey;  
 The poor mechanic porters crowding in  
 Their heavy burthens at his narrow gate;  
 The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum,  
 Delivering o'er to executors pale  
 The lazy yawning drone. *King Henry V.*

And who, but Shakespeare, could have embodied such an admirable description of a *horse*, in 4 rhiming lines —

Round hoofed, short jointed, fetlocks shag and long,  
 Broad breast, full eyes, small head, and nostril wide,  
 High crest, short ears, straight legs and passing strong,  
 Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide —  
 Look, what a Horse should have, he did not lack,  
 Save a proud rider on so proud a back.

*Venus and Adonis.*

Again — take his description of the Barge as well as of Cleopatra, both of which are resplendent with beauties — the words culled to suit both objects:

The Barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
 Burned on the water; the poop was beaten-gold;  
 Purple the sails, and so perfum'd, that [silver,  
 The winds were love-sick: with them the oars were  
 Which, to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made

The water which they beat, to follow faster,  
 As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,  
 It beggared all description : she did lie  
 In her pavilion, &c. *Anthony and Cleopatra.*

Where shall we find *advice* couched in happier terms, than,  
 in the parental expressions of Polonius to Laertes —

Give thy thoughts no tongue ;  
 Nor any unproportioned thought, his act.  
 Be thou familiar, but, by no means, vulgar.  
 The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
 Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel ;  
 But, do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
 Of each new-hatched, unfledg'd comrade. Beware  
 Of ent'rance to a quarrel ; but, being in,  
 Bear't that the oppos'd may beware of thee.  
 Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice ;  
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.  
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
 But, not expressed in fancy — rich, not gaudy ;  
 For, the apparel oft proclaims the man :  
 And they in France, of the best rank and station,  
 Are most select and generous chief in that.  
 Neither a borrower nor a lender be ;  
 For, loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
 This above all — To thine ownself be true ;  
 And it must follow, as the night the day,  
 Thou canst not then be false to any man. *Hamlet.*

This is the advice of Polonius *as a father*, not *as a garrulous courtier*.

But, indulgent reader, I must cease quoting; or, I shall occupy too many pages on one point: besides, I need not instance more examples of either happy expressions or poetic thoughts, since every student in Shakespeare can quote a variety of passages, showing how

The Poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
 And, as *imagination* bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the Poet's pen  
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy Nothing  
 A local habitation and a name.

*Midsummer-night's Dream.*

That I am not singular in my appreciation of Shakespeare's excellence in this particular, and that there are others who acknowledge his superiority, his best editor, Charles Knight, bears witness —

We venture to offer an opinion, that if any single composition were required, to exhibit the power of the English language *for purposes of Poetry*, that composition would be the *Midsummer-night's Dream*.

Such minds as Dr. Johnson and Malone, were not constituted to enjoy the beauties and exquisite delicacies of this wonderful Drama with all the golden cadences of its resplendent poesy; but, it is not therefore the less wonderful and harmonious: Hallam writes of it as being "altogether original in one of the most beautiful conceptions that ever visited the mind of a poet;" and as to Coleridge, he is fairly in raptures! the following extract, he pronounces to be "Very Anacreon, in perfectness, proportion, grace, and spontaneity. So far it is Greek; but then add, O! what wealth, what wild ranging, and yet what compression and condensation of English fancy. In truth, there is nothing in Anacreon more perfect than these thirty lines, or half so rich and imaginative. They form a speckless diamond."

*Puck.* Now the hungry lion roars,

And the wolf behowls the moon;  
Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,  
All with weary task fordone.

Now the wasted brands do glow,

Whilst the scritch-owl, scritch'ing loud,  
Puts the wretch, that lies in wo\* [\*wo, woes  
In rememb'rance of a shroud.

Now it is the time of night

That the graves, all gaping wide,  
Every one lets forth his sprite,  
In the church-way paths to glide:  
And we fairies, that do run

By the triple\* Hecate's team, [ought to be *triple*.  
From the presence of the sun,

Following darkness like a dream,  
Now are frolic; not a mouse

Shall disturb this hallowed house:  
I am sent, with broom, before,  
To sweep the dust behind the door.



(Enter Oberon and Titania, with their train)

*Oberon.* Through the house give glimmering light,

By the dead and drowsy fire;

Every elf, and every sprite,

Hop as light as bird from brier;

And this ditty, after me,

Sing and dance it trippingly.

*Titania.* First, rehearse this song by rote:

To each word a warbling note,

Hand in hand, with fairy grace,

Will we sing and bless the place.

I have inserted these 30 lines for the approval or disapproval, the admiration or contempt, of my readers, according to the peculiar constitution of their individual minds.

Phelps — the Shakesperean Phelps has recently ventured to produce this inimitable Drama on the boards of Saddler's Wells, to the high gratification of the Islington adorers of the Star of Poets. I have not *seen* it — bodily; I would not risk the chance of destroying it in my mind's eye. But, enough! Shakespeare tells us —

Never durst Poet touch a pen to write,

Untill his ink were tempered with Love's sighs;

O, *then* his lines would ravish savage ears,

And plant in tyrants mild humility.

From *Women's-eyes* this doctrine I derive:

*They* sparkle still the right Promethean fire;

*They* are the books, the arts, the academes,

That show, contain, and nourish all the world.

*Love's Labor's Lost.*



## CHAPTER III.

*Shakespeare as a Dramatist.*

When Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes  
 First reared the Stage, immortal Shakespeare rose ;  
 Each change of many-colored life he drew,  
 Exhausted worlds, and then, Imagined new ;  
 Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,  
 And panting Time toiled after him, in vain :  
 His powerful strokes presiding Truth impressed,  
 And unresisted Passion stormed the breast !

JOHNSON'S *Prologue*. 1747.

Rare Ben Jonson styled his friend Shakespeare the *Star of Poets* ; and, I may safely add, Shakespeare was the *Sun of Dramatists*, around which, the Planets of our drama, together with all the lesser Orbs of our literature, may be said to revolve.

Sir Walter Scott (the greatest of all modern Dramatists) has remarked —

Nothing went before Shakespeare which in any respect was fit to fix and stamp the character of a *national* Drama ; and certainly no one will succeed him capable of establishing, by mere authority, a form more restricted than that which Shakespeare used.

Other Dramatists have studiously *lowered* themselves to the *tastes*, and, too often, to the *vices* of their auditors, telling us —

“The Drama's laws the Drama's patrons give ;

For, we that live to please, *must please* to live : ”

but, it was the singular honor of Shakespeare to elevate his auditors to himself — by enlarging their views and irradiating their understandings. I am aware that he has been stigmatized as a Leveler [not *leveller*] but, the accusation is too contemptible to deserve my refutation ; for, every reader of Shakespeare knows, that if a Leveler, he was a Leveler of no ordinary cast ; the nobleness of his soul invariably impelling him to *level upwards* : his insatiable desire of doing good to others, led him, ever and anon, to

Find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

*As You Like It.*

Schlegel, who was richly imbued with the spirit of Shakespeare, delivered a Course of 30 admirably composed Lectures, at Vienna, in 1808, on Dramatic Art and Literature; 7 of which are devoted to an Examination of the English Stage: and though some of our critics seem very unwilling to admit, that Schlegel, a German, should have taught the English nation *how* and *why* Shakespeare ought to be read, studied, admired, loved, I recommend those 7 Lectures to the attentive perusal of every reader of these pages. In his 23rd Lecture, he writes —

- There never, perhaps, existed so comprehensive a talent for *Characterisation*, as that in Shakespeare. It not only grasps every diversity of rank, age, and sex, down to the lisps of infancy; not only do the king and the beggar, the hero and the pickpocket, the sage and the idiot, speak and act with equal truthfulness; not only does he transport himself to distant ages and foreign nations, and portray with the greatest accuracy (a few apparent violations of costume excepted) the spirit of the ancient Romans, of the French in the wars with the English, of the English themselves during a great part of their history, of the Southern Europeans (in the serious parts of many Comedies) the cultivated society of the day, and the barbarisms of a Norman-foretime; his *human* characters have not only such depth and individuality that they do not admit of being classed under common names, and are inexhaustible even in conception: this Prometheus forms not *men* merely, but he opens the gates of the magical world of *spirits*, calls up the midnight ghost, exhibits before us the witches amidst their unhallowed rites, peoples the air with sportive fairies and sylphs — and these beings, though existing only in the Imagination, nevertheless, possess such truth and consistency, that even with such misshapen abortions as Caliban, he extorts the assenting conviction, that *were* there such beings, they would so conduct themselves.

Such was the opinion of Schlegel — a man whose single judgement on Shakespearean [not *Shakespearean*] matters,

has weight enough with me, to “o’erweigh a whole theatre of others.” Hazlitt confesses, that he had been provoked to write his *Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays*, from “some little jealousy” that it should have been reserved for a Foreigner to give “reasons for the faith which we English have in Shakespeare” — but, Hazlitt did not possess the like *philosophic acuteness*, nor a tithe of the *veneration* for Shakespeare, which had taken possession of the head and heart and soul of the enraptured German.

Shakespeare, however, not only carried the most fruitful and daring Imagination into the kingdom of Nature, and Nature into the regions of Imagination, lying far beyond the confines of reality — approximating the remote and familiarizing the wonderful — but, in his Characters, whether virtuous or vicious, whether noble or ignoble, whether admirable or despicable, He is ever mindful of inculcating *humanity, morality, and religion*.

It was one of the prerogatives of Shakespeare, to be equally eminent in imparting *weakness* and *littleness* as *strength* and *greatness* — witness, Justice Shallow and King Lear, Dol Tearsheet and Lady Macbeth, Prince Arthur and Prince Hamlet. Who, like Shakespeare, has proved himself capable of producing such widely different casts of character as Bottom and Mercutio, Wolsey and Falstaff, Imogen and Cleopatra, the Spirit Ariel and the Ghost of the Majesty of Denmark, with many others?

Shakespeare has certainly challenged the judgement of Critics, by introducing into the same play, and even into the same scene, the *feigned* madness of Hamlet and the *real* madness of Ophelia, the *real* madness of Lear and the *feigned* madness of Edgar — characters so wonderfully accurate and definitely true, that Physicians have again and again recommended them to the *study* of their Pupils, from which they might enrich their knowledge as surely as from observing real cases. Shakespeare’s *analysis of madness* has often been referred to for “clearness, conciseness, and accuracy” — the President of the College of Physicians, in a Lecture recently delivered before that scientific Body, illustrated his observations on *Insanity* by quoting “Shakespeare’s exemplary definition of that malady” —

*Queen.* This is the very coinage of your brain :

This bodiless creation ecstasy\*

[not *ecstasy*

Is very cunning in.

*Hamlet.*

Ecstasy !

My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music. It is not *madness*  
That I have uttered ; bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will *re-word* — which *madness*  
*Would gambol from.*

Look at the two characters of misanthropy, Timon and Apemantus, placed side by side ; the one a man-hater from nature, the other from circumstances ; so exhibited, as if penned to dare criticism.

Examine the two pedants, Sir Nathaniel and Holofernis ; where are their fellows ? In O'Keefe's *Agreeable Surprise* and in Colman's *Heir at Law*, you may meet with single pedants — the one talking Latin to a milkmaid, the other to a tallow-chandler, which, as Knight avows, is mere *farce* : but, in the pedantry of Shakespeare's curate and schoolmaster, whom he brings face to face, you have not *farce*, but *comedy*.

Who, but the master-dramatist, would have introduced Jaques and Touchstone to each other ? Knight is not far wrong, when he asserts —

The amalgamation of Jaques and Touchstone with Orlando and Rosalind, is one of the most wonderful efforts of *originality* in the whole compass of poetical creation.

Again — consider Shakespeare's various portraitures of one and the same Passion ; take, for instance, the *jealousy* in Othello, in Leontes, in Posthumus, in Ford, and in others ; you cannot but admit, that *the jealousies* are as different as *the men* ; yet, each and all equally true to Nature.

Behold his Fools ; observe the motley range of these ticklish gentry, from Aguecheek to Jaques ; *all* cast in the moulds of Nature — yet, every mould *broken*, when the individual character had been formed ; there is but *one* of each.

I am here reminded of what Archdeacon Fisher wrote to one of his friends —

I must repeat to you an opinion I have long held ; that *no man* had ever more than One conception. Milton emptied his mind in the First part of *Paradise Lost* ; all the rest is transcript of *Self*. The *Odyssey* is a repetition of the *Iliad*. When you have seen *one*

Claude, you have seen *all*. I can think of no exception — but, Shakespeare; he is always varied, never mannered.

And this remark reminds me of that voluminous sentence,

Shakespeare, an Exception to all Rules !

pronounced by England's greatest living Benefactor, in his eloquent Glasgow Discourse, 6 April, 1825.

It has often been asserted (and Pope held the opinion)

Not one of the Speeches in Shakespeare's dramas, could be transferred to any other Character, without impropriety —

that some word or circumstance would, by transfer, be out of place, and prove it to have been *torn* from that connection in which the master Artist fixed it — and, hitherto, I have not discovered that the assertion exceeds truth. Hence, the insufferableness of the many *pseudo-improvements* on the first folio edition of Shakespeare's works; hence, the impatience of all true Shakespeareans with the dislocated, the marred and mangled *Acting-editions*, so styled — those monstrosities got up by Cibber, Dryden, Lansdowne, Tate, and other *tinkers* and *butchers* of Shakespeare; hence, the indignation so frequently and forcibly expressed by Schlegel, Coleridge, Charles Lamb, Knight, and other discriminating writers of our day, against the spurious and worse than good-for-nothing editions, now, I hope, for ever repudiated by judicious Managers and intelligent Readers. I require no further proof of any man's want of taste, no further proof of his utter incapability to appreciate the myriad-minded Shakespeare, than the possibility of his reading the disfigurations and abominations of Colley Cibber and the gang of slaughterers, in preference to Charles Knight's copy of the original edition of Shakespeare's Works, published in 1623.

Having enumerated Dryden among the *tinkers* of Shakespeare, it is but common justice to his literary character, to state, that He lived to see his error in disturbing the text of Shakespeare's Works as given to the world by John Heminge and Henrie Condell; that he not only regretted his presumption, in having had the audaciousness to alter Shakespeare's text, but, that he had the manliness to acknowledge it, the moral courage to confess it publicly.

To me, it is evident, that, in his earlier days, Dryden did not apprehend the real nature of the *romantic* drama, the Shakespearian drama; he did not perceive that *simplicity* constituted one of its chief elements; his head was full of the intricacy of the schools of Greece; but, in his riper years, he writes, in his Preface to *All for Love* —

In my style, I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare; which, that I might perform more freely, I have disencumbered myself from *rhime*.

It had become fashionable to prefer Fletcher to Shakespeare, in the *transition-period* of English poetry — the age of Dryden; but Dryden, whose mind had become susceptible of higher intellectuality, and capable of appreciating the towering Genius of the Father of the English Drama, boldly expressed his opinion in the following words —

The characters of Fletcher are poor and narrow, in comparison of Shakespeare's; I remember not One which is not borrowed from him — unless you will except that strange mixture of a man in the *King and no King*. So that, in this part, Shakespeare is generally *worth our imitation*; and to imitate Fletcher, is but to copy after him who was a Copier. Shakespeare had a *universal* mind; Fletcher a more confined and limited; for, though he treated *love* in perfection; yet, *honor, ambition, revenge*, and, generally, *all* the stronger passions, he either touched not, or, not masterly. To conclude all, he was a *limb* of Shakespeare.

Dryden, as all my well-read perusers know, was the great critical authority of the age in which he flourished; an authority before whose opinions all other critics bowed; and in reference to his "great scene" between Troilus and Hector, he wrote, in 1679 —

They who think to do me an *injury*, by saying it is an *imitation* of the scene betwixt Brutus and Cassius, *do me an honor* — by supposing I *could* imitate the incomparable Shakespeare.

Hence, though Dryden, in his earlier critiques, depreciated Shakespeare, he did not remain ignorant in spite of experience; as he grew older, he grew wiser; and rose into higher and still higher admiration of the master Genius.

As this is a point of considerable importance, in treating upon Shakespeare *as a Dramatist*, I shall endeavor to place it unmistakably before my readers — without occupying much space.

That the *genius* of the Father of the English Drama was *not* revealed to the Shakespearean Tinkers of by-gone days, I shall render apparent, by quoting *their own* words, which they palmed upon the public as *improvements*.

The redoubted and redoutable John Dennis, one of the great pseudo-improvers of Shakespeare's text, among other daring things, attempted to remodel *Coriolanus*; and applied himself, might and main, to smoothe down Shakespeare's verses, "according to the rules of Art." Well, he remodeled *Coriolanus*, after this fashion —

This boy, that, like an eagle in a dove-cot,  
Fluttered a thousand Volces in Corioli,  
And did it without second or acquittance,

Thus sends their mighty chief to mourn in hell!

On turning to Shakespeare's text, I find the original of these lines, in the quarrel between Aufidius and Coriolanus — but, expressed in terms perfectly intelligible and appropriate. When Coriolanus apostrophizes Mars, Aufidius bids him not *name* the god, calling Coriolanus *a boy of tears*, which rouses the indignation of the Roman beyond controul [not *control* nor yet *controul*] — but, I shall give a few lines previous to the remodeled passage —

*Aufidius*. You Lords and heads of the State, perfidiously  
He has betrayed your business, and given up,  
For certain drops of salt, your city Rome —  
I say *your city* — to his wife and mother:  
Breaking his oath and resolution, like  
A twist of rotten silk; never admitting  
Counsel o' the war; but, at his nurse's tears,  
He whined and roared away your victory;  
That pages blushed at him, and men of heart  
Looked wondering each at others.

*Coriolanus*. Hear'st thou, Mars!

*Aufidius*. Name not the god, thou boy of tears —

*Coriolanus*. Ha!

*Aufidius*. No more!

*Coriolanus*. Measureless Liar! thou hast made my heart  
Too great for what contains it. Boy — O slave!  
Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time that ever  
I was forced to scold. Your judgements, my grave lords,  
Must give this cur the lie: and his own notion [bear  
(Who wears my stripes impressed on him, that must  
My beating to his grave) shall join to thrust  
The lie unto him.



1st. Lord. Peace, both! and hear me speak.  
*Coriolanus.* Cut me to pieces, Volces; men and lads,  
 Stain all your edges on me — Boy — false hound!  
 If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,  
 That, like an eagle in a dove-cot, I  
 Fluttered your Volcians in Corioli:  
 Alone I did it — Boy!

— but, these lines, too impassioned for the water-gruel Critics of the last century, were reduced to what they called *classical propriety*. Out! I say, upon such classical Tinkers and unnatural Butchers —

I had rather be a Kitten and cry — *mew*!  
 Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers;  
 I had rather hear a brazen candlestick turned,  
 Or, a dry wheel grate on the axletree;  
 And that would set my teeth nothing on edge,  
 Nothing so much as mincing poetry;  
 'Tis like the forced gait of a shuffling nag.

*Henry IV.*

— yet, this same Dennis was looked up to as every way superior to Shakespeare, whose *comedies* as well as *tragedies* he took upon him to *reform*; and he so thoroughly metamorphosed *The Merry Wives of Windsor* into the *Comical Gallant*, that it would be a waste of time to present a single quotation. It is, perhaps, worthy of remark, this *prosaic reformer* of Shakespeare, prefixed to his outrageous transformation of the *Merry Wives*, an *Essay on — on what* think you, gentle reader? why, *on the degeneracy of the Taste for poetry*!

It is still more strange, how a clever man, like Sir William Davenant, who certainly had a turn for poetry — witness his *Gondibert*, and other poems, could so far lose his self-respect, as to fabricate *The Law against Lovers*, out of Measure for Measure and Much ado about Nothing: and a precious Nothing he made of it! In Shakespeare we read —

*Isabella.* Could great men thunder  
 As Jove himself does, Jove would ne'er be quiet;  
 For, every pelting petty officer  
 Would use his heaven for thunder—nothing but thunder:  
 Merciful Heaven!  
 Thou rather, with thy sharp and sulphurous bolt,  
 Splitt'st the unwedgeable and gnarl'd oak,

Than the soft myrtle : but man, proud man !  
 Dressed in a little brief authority,  
 Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,  
 As make the angels weep. *Measure for Measure.*

— which was altered, by Davenant, as follows —

If men could thunder  
 As great Jove does, Jove ne'er would quiet be ;  
 For, every cholerick petty officer,  
 Would use his magazine in heaven for thunder :  
 We nothing should but thunder hear. Sweet Heaven !  
 Thou rather with thy stiff and sulph'rous bolt  
 Dost split the knotty and obdurate oak,  
 Than the soft myrtle.

Not to criticize these pitiable alterations too severely, I cannot but prefer, with Charles Knight,

Shakespeare's *Merciful* to Davenant's *Sweet Heaven*;  
*Sharp and sulphurous*, to *stiff and sulph'rous bolt*;  
*Unwedgeable and gnarled* to *knotty and obdurate oak*.

It was not the *ideas* merely, but the *words* and *expressions* of Shakespeare which annoyed the pigmy Critics of the last century; they could not appreciate his "sweet and honeyed sentences," his "quips and quiddities;" they did not admire his "red pestilence," his "still-vexed Bermoothes;" they could not imagine it "an easy leap to pluck bright honor from the moon," nor conceive how a murderer's hand, should "the multitudinous seas incarnardine;" they were too gross, dull, and insensible to feel the "honey heavy dew of slumber;" for, they were not "made of penetrable stuff:" they remind one of such men as Falstaff mentions — "made after supper of a cheese-paring."

If, when farther advanced in penning this little work, I find room for such an exhibition, I shall present specimens of still deeper *Sinkings in the dramatic Art*, from that Prince of Tinkers, Colley Cibber.

In his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (which Reviewers have praised beyond their worth) Hazlitt has, to his credit, discountenanced the wretched *Acting-editions* —

The manner in which Shakespeare's plays have been generally altered or rather mangled by modern mechanists, is a disgrace to the English stage. The patchwork Richard III, which is acted under the sanction of his name, and which was manufactured by Cibber, is a striking example of this remark. &c.

Even *The Tempest*, one of the most original as well as one of the most perfect of Shakespeare's dramas, wherein he has exhibited such vast variety of power, filling it with grace and grandeur, was actually tinkered, by Davenant and Dryden jointly, to suit the vitiated taste of that tasteless period: and Shadwell, a brother tinker, tinkered it into an opera; and an opera it remained in Garrick's time, who (would it were not so) dirtied his fingers in similar tinkering — an irrefragable proof *to my mind*, that Garrick, the idoliser of Shakespeare, beheld his idol as through a glass — darkly. But, as Knight justly observes —

It is one of the manifestations of the vitality of Shakespeare, that, going about their *alterations* in the regular way, according to the rules of art, the most stupid and prosaic of his Improvers have been unable to deprive the natural man of his vigour [*vigor*] even by their most violent depletions. His robustness was too great even for the poetical doctors to destroy it. Lord Lansdowne actually stripped the flesh off Shylock; but, the anatomy walked about vigorously for *sixty* years, till Macklin put the muscles on again. Colley Cibber turned King John into *Papal Tyranny*; and the stage King John was made to denounce the Pope and Guy Faux for a *century*, till Mr. Macready gave us back again the weak and crafty King in his original truth and character. Nahum Tate deposed the Richard II. of Shakespeare wholly [*wholly*] and irredeemably, turning him into *The Sicilian Usurper*. How Cibber manufactured Richard III. is known to all men. Dufey melted down Cymbeline with no slight portion of alloy. [*allay*] Tate remodelled [*remodeled*] Lear — and such a Lear! Davenant mangled Macbeth — but, we can hardly quarrel with him for it; for, he gave us the music of Locke in company with his own verses. &c.

*History of Opinion.*

We of the present day, cannot conceive how these various Play-menders summoned impudence sufficient, thus to distort and deform Shakespeare's dramas, by their execrable alterations and transformations; and we might, perhaps, discredit the reports given of the existence of such brazen-faced Tinkers, had we not printed copies of their pitiful excrescences. In that maudlin age, the critics had, somehow, got it into their heads, that *Shakespeare wanted Art*, and

that *Shakespeare wanted Learning* — because, Ben Jonson had said the former in a conversation, in January 1619, with Drummond of Hawthornden; and had hinted the latter, in his commendatory verses on the publication of the first folio edition of *Shakespeare's Works*, in 1623 — therefore, the Purveyors of stage amusements, set to, in right good earnest, to rectify Shakespeare's *defects in art* and to supply his *deficiencies in learning*. But, to the honor of Jonson, be it stated in this place, He not only esteemed Shakespeare as a man, but recorded it as his opinion, that Shakespeare was greater than the greatest of all the great Poets and Dramatists, ancient and modern. See his beautiful and manly Ode on Shakespeare.

In 1854, it is pretty generally known and admitted, that *Shakespeare had his own Art*, and that Aristotle himself would readily succumb to Shakespeare's higher authority.

As to his *Learning* let Dryden's opinion have its due weight —

He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still [*constantly*] present to him, and he drew them not laboriously but luckily [*happily*]; when he describes anything, you more than *see* it, you *feel* it too. Those who accuse him to *have wanted Learning*, give him the greater commendation; *he was naturally learned*: he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.

These few lines from Dryden, have more intrinsic worth, than all the pedantic and impertinent observations to be found in the Rev. Dr. Farmer's once admired *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare*.

I wish now, my respected readers, to direct your attention to the

*Nicety of Shakespeare's Discriminations;*

as, in my judgement, his *discriminations* prove his superiority, as a *Dramatist*, more incontestibly than the *variety* of his Characters; for, even those which resemble each other most, are as individually *distinct*, as those which stand in direct contrast.

To test this bold assertion, examine any two Characters possessing similitude in their leading features — such, for instance, as the noted imbecile characters, Richard II and

Henry VI; which an ordinary dramatist would have confounded, but which Shakespeare has kept perfectly distinct, notwithstanding they were both of them *kings*, both of them *effeminate* and *unfortunate*, both of them *deposed*, losing their crowns through *imbecility* — and other points, common to both.

Hazlitt attempted an improvement on the *analytical criticism* of Mason, contained in his *parallel* between Macbeth and Richard III; and, notwithstanding Leigh Hunt has styled Hazlitt “an admirable critic;” notwithstanding Hazlitt thought himself a prodigious critic and a mighty clever fellow — taking for his printed motto Iago’s bragging sentence,

I am nothing, if not Critical!

notwithstanding all that has been written to Hazlitt’s honor and glory, by Patmore, in Douglas Jerrold’s excellent *Shilling Magazine*; I shall try to make an improvement on Hazlitt.

Those of my readers who may not feel interested in such *analytical critiques*, can spare themselves the trouble [properly *trouble*] of wading through the following Chapter, and continue the general subject, at the commencement of Chapter V — for, as Shakespeare has it,

No profit grows, where is no pleasure ta’en.\* [*\*taken*

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## CHAPTER IV.

*Analytical examination of the two Characters  
Macbeth and Richard III.*

Pride of his own, and wonder of this age,  
 Who first created, and yet rules the Stage;  
 Bold to design, all-powerful to express,  
 Shakespeare each passion drew in every dress:  
 Great above rule, and imitating none;  
 Rich without borrowing — Nature was *his own*!

MALLETT.

Cumberland, in 4 consecutive papers of his *Observer* (69 — 72) has contemplated Macbeth and Richard, in 3 lights —

- I. The premeditation of their crime;
- II. The perpetration of it; and
- III. The catastrophe of their death:

but these are not sufficient for my present purpose; neither am I satisfied with Mason's, nor with Hazlitt's attempt; and as I consider the *Nicety of Discrimination* a matter of much importance in the reputation of Shakespeare, as a *Dramatist*, I am desirous of placing his superiority in this particular, irrefragably before my *inquiring* readers.

In Shakespeare's representation of Macbeth and Richard, both of them are *bold* and *daring*; both of them *violent*, *cruel*, and *treacherous*; both of them *highborn* and *ambitious*; both of them *tyrants*, *usurpers*, and *kings*; both of them *murderers* of their lawful sovereigns; and both of them *slain in battle*: hence, in a dozen particulars, Macbeth and Richard are similar; and, in any other artist's hand than that of our unrivaled Discriminator, we should have had a repetition of the like general traits, more or less exaggerated; but, the Secretary of Nature has written them down with marked speciality, and presented us with two strikingly different characters.

Macbeth is introduced to us (in his Wife's soliloquy, on the receipt of his letter) as *frank*, *sociable*, and *generous* —

Yet, do I fear thy Nature;  
 It is too full o' the milk of human-kindness,  
 To catch the nearest way: thou would'st be great;  
 Art not without ambition; but, without  
 The illness should attend it. Hie thee hither,


That I may pour *my spirits* in thine ear,  
 And chastise, with the valor of my tongue,  
 All that impedes thee from the golden-round  
 Which fate and metaphysical\* aid doth seem [\**super-*  
 To have thee crowned withall. *natural*

Richard is introduced, in the Play bearing his name, as being, from his very cradle, *deformed* in mind as well as body. The dramatist opens the Play with a soliloquy, in which Richard, duke of Glo'ster, says —

But I, that am *not shaped* for sportive tricks,  
 Nor *made* to court an amorous looking-glass;  
 I, that am cùrtailed thus of fair proportion,  
 Cheated of feature, by dissembling Nature,  
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time  
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up —  
 And that so lamely and unfashionable  
 That dogs bark at me, as I *halt* by them;  
 Why I, in this weak piping time of Peace,  
 Have no delight to pass away the time —  
 Unless to see\* my shadow in the sun, [\**not spy*  
 And dèscant on mine own deformity:  
 And, therefore since I cannot prove a Lover,  
 To entertain these fair well-spoken days\* [\**not dames*  
 I am determinèd to prove a Villain!

— whence we learn, that Richard is *violent, cruel, and treacherous*, in constitution; whereas, Macbeth becomes so, from “fate and metaphysical aid.” The prophecies of the weird sisters, the instigations of his wife, and the golden opportunity, lead and impel Macbeth into guilt, crime, and murder; but, Richard needs no extraneous influences to spur him on to wickedness; the violence of his passions and his constitutional longings after mischief, carry him unscrupulously through a variety of atrocities, in the prosecution of his ambitious designs.

Observe, curious reader, there is a *dawn* to the violence in Macbeth's mind; it breaks forth in faint glimmerings — like a morning in winter, gathering strength *by degrees*; but, in Richard, it blazes out at once: and, like a tropical sun, it mounts without any harbinger of its approach.

But,  such is Richard, as he appears before us in the play of Richard III. It would, however, be gross injustice towards Shakespeare, not to acknowledge that Richard is not introduced to the reader for *the first time* in the play

bearing his name; he is an old acquaintance, familiar to the reader of 2nd and 3rd Parts of Henry VI; and his very first Speech is characteristic of the sort of man the dramatist had in his mind's eye. When York asks his sons, Edward and Richard, whether they will be bail for him, how characteristic their replies —

*York.* Will you not, Sons?

*Edward.* Ay, noble father; if our *words* will serve.

*Richard.* And if *words* will not, then, our *weapons* shall. In 3rd Scene of the same Act, Richard speaks as a gallant knight, on his father's saying —

This happy day  
Is not itself, nor have we won one foot,  
If Sal'sbury be lost.

*Richard.* My noble father,  
Three times today I holp him to his horse,  
Three times bestrid him, thrice I led him off,  
Persuaded him from any further act;  
But still, where danger was, still there I met him;  
And, like rich hangings in a homely house,  
So was his will, in his old feeble body —  
But, noble as he is, look where he comes.

*Salisb.* Now, by my sword, well hast thou fought today;  
By the mass, so did we all! I thank you, Richard:  
God knows how long it is I have to live,  
And it hath pleased him, that three times today  
You have defended me from imminent death.

At the opening of 3rd Part of Henry VI, Richard enters with the head of Somerset, and, throwing it down, says —

Speak thou for me, and tell them what I did.

*York.* Richard hath best deserved of all my Sons.

In this first Scene, Henry and York agree, that Henry shall be King for life and York succeed to the crown; yet, in the very next Scene, Richard urges his father to break his oath with Henry —

An Oath is of no moment, being not took  
Before a true and lawful magistrate,  
That hath authority o'er him that swears:  
Henry had none, but did usurp the place;  
Then, seeing 'twas He that made you to depose,  
Your oath, my lord, is vain and frivolous.  
Therefore, to arms!

The Act closes with the death of York; and in 2nd Act, the



dramatist continues developing [not *devellopping*] the character of Richard; the Act closing with his brother Edward's elevation to the throne: in 3rd Act, speaking of Edward, Richard exclaims, at the commencement of a long and very important soliloquy —

'Would he were wasted — marrow, bones, and all!  
That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring,  
To cross me from the golden time *I look for*.

— the dramatist thus preparing his auditors and readers for *the kind* of Richard he intended should eventually sit upon the throne — closing that soliloquy with,

Can I do this, and cannot get a Crown?  
Tut! were it further off, *I'll pluck it down!*

It is in this soliloquy and in that in Act V, commencing —  
What! will the aspiring blood of Lancaster  
Sink in the ground?

that the dramatist teaches his readers to draw the most important inferences as to Richard's *mental* temperament. And here, I must call my reader's particular attention to the skill with which Shakespeare gradually unfolds, in tones of the sublimest morality, the direful consequences of placing *the moral* in subordination to the *mere intellectual* man — it is one of the grand moral lessons so abundant in his dramas.

Schlegel, treating of Richard, has remarked —

He lowers obliquely, like a dark thunder-cloud on the horizon, which gradually approaches nearer and nearer, and first pours out the devastating elements with which it is charged, when it hangs over the head of mortals.

Richard's favorite amusement, is, to ridicule others; and he possesses an eminent satirical wit. He entertains, at bottom, a contempt for all mankind; for, he is confident of his ability to deceive them, whether as his instruments or his adversaries. In hypocrisy he is particularly fond of using religious forms, as if actuated by a desire of profaning in the service of hell the religion whose blessings he had inwardly abjured.

Notwithstanding the uniform aversion with which he inspires us, he still engages us in the greatest variety of ways, by his profound skill in dissimulation, his wit, his prudence, his presence of mind, his quick activity, and his valor.

The 3rd Part of Henry VI, closes with Edward's being peacefully seated on the throne; and Shakespeare opens

the 4th Part of his One drama (I, II, III Part of Henry VI, and Richard III) with Richard's well-known soliloquy, beginning —

*Glo'ster*. Now is the winter of our discontent [son  
Made glorious summer, by this sun\* of York — [\*not  
wherein are the 15 lines already quoted, which, though  
“very abrupt,” if the Play be taken as a *whole*, have not  
anything abrupt in them, if taken as the dramatist designed  
them — that is, a *continuation* of the 3 preceding Parts.

In this same soliloquy, Richard avows —

Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,  
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams,  
To set my brother Clarence and the King  
In deadly hate, the one against the other:  
And, if king Edward be as true and just  
As I am subtle, false, and treacherous,

This day should Clarence closely be mewed up —

Unlike Macbeth, here are not any *gradations* in guilt, any expressions of hesitation; Richard plunges into blood with the familiarity of habit; ordering his tools to murder his Brother, with all the unfeeling tranquility of a Caligula: whereas, Macbeth is filled with horror but at the thought of murdering Duncan, and hesitates at committing the bloody deed — his wife taunting him with his

Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*.

Do not overlook the dramatist's having made *humanity* and *honor* the grand characteristics of Macbeth, whose progress in crime, is an unparalleled lecture in ethical anatomy; that, to his Wife, *cruelty* was natural; and that, *ambition* was common to them both. Nothing short of the all-subverting influences of his highly gifted Wife, could have converted the *honorable* and *kind-hearted* Macbeth into the callous villain he becomes.

The dramatist has ably developed Lady Macbeth's character, in the following 14 lines —

Come, you Spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, *unsex* me here;  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse;  
That no compunctious visitings of Nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace\* between [\*not  
The effect and it? Come to my woman's breasts, [*pace*

And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
 Wherever in your sightless substances  
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick Night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell!  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes;  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
 To cry — *Hold! Hold!*

Who, but our inimitable dramatist would have dared thus to introduce a character so loftily, so sublimely tragic? presenting her in a Speech containing such a terrible invocation: and who else could have brought such a terrific creation to an appropriate close? On her very first appearance, she prepares for an assault on Macbeth's *conscience*, notwithstanding He is too full o' the milk of human kindness. He enters before she quits the Scene — just as she is uttering the words *Hold! Hold!* and mark, my readers, with what consummate address she receives him —

Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!

Greater than both — by the *All-hail* hereafter!  
 thus artfully greeting him with the gratulations of the weird sisters — not with the softening caresses of a Wife, but with confirmatory predictions, with the alluring salutations of ambition —

Thy letters have transported me beyond  
 This ignorant present, and I feel *now*  
 The future in the instant!

The intensity of Lady Macbeth's passionate feelings, hurries her into an instant preparation for Duncan's never going thence —

*Macbeth.* My dearest love,  
 Duncan comes here tonight.

*Lady M.* And when goes hence?

*Macbeth.* Tomorrow — as He purposes.

*Lady M.* O, ne'er

Shall sun *that morrow* see!

Your face, my thane, is as a book, where men  
 May read strange matters: to beguile the time,  
*Look* like the time; hear *welcome* in your eye,  
 Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower,  
 But, be the serpent under it. He that's coming  
 Must be provided for; and you shall put  
 This night's great business into my dispatch;

Which shall to all our nights and days to come,  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

*Macbeth.* We will speak further.

*Lady M.* Only look up clear;  
To alter favor,\* ever is to fear: [\*the countenance  
Leave all the rest to me.

The precipitate advances of Lady Macbeth to insure the object of her Husband's ambition, seem to take him by surprise and half-stupify him. The 4 pregnant words, *we will speak further*, foretell the catastrophe; from that instant, we *feel* that he is lost.

The chief obstacle in the way of Macbeth's selfish desires, proceeded from the opposition of his *moral faculties*, with which he was invested by Nature, to judge with supreme authority, concerning his *passions*, and to restrain their impetuosity. Accordingly, when the thought of seizing the crown arises in his mind, he feels at once shocked and astonished: justice and humanity are alike surprised; they shrink from the suggestion; he regards his own mind with amazement, and recoils at the guiltiness of the thought —

This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill — cannot be good — If ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I *am*thane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of Nature?

His virtuous principles have here the apparent ascendancy over his passions; but his *ambition* is not repulsed: he abandons the enterprise, because the means of gratifying it, seem both shocking and impracticable; but, the passion itself is not renounced; it continues vehement; it perseveres with obstinacy; it importunes, it harasses his mind; still the *desire* exists; and, though deterred by his moral feelings from proceeding directly, he indulges the somewhat romantic wish —

[me,  
If Chance *will* have me King, why, Chance may crown  
Without my stir.

Thus distracted with contending principles, irresolute, longing for the event, but, fearful of promoting it, he seems to have given up the design of murdering Duncan, and entertains some extravagant expectation of inheriting the crown by right of succession —

Come what come may,

Time and the hour runs through the roughest day!  
and thus, he recovers some degree of tranquility. But, it is of short duration; for he is again roused, by the following words of Duncan —

My plenteous joys,  
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
And you whose places are the nearest, know,  
We will establish our estate upon  
Our eldest, Malcolm; whom we name, hereafter  
*The Prince of Cumberland* —

— the uneasy sensation in Macbeth's mind, excited by the perception of the obstacle to the accomplishment of his wishes, in the person of Malcolm, renews his ambition and increases its violence —

(*Aside*) *The Prince of Cumberland!* That is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else, o'erleap;  
For, in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!  
Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
The eye wink at the hand! yet, *let that be*,  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see!

Observe, my respected readers, that the thought of murdering Duncan, arose in the mind of Macbeth *before* his coming in contact with his Wife; she did not *first* suggest the murder to Macbeth. It was his Letter which *prepared* her mind to be alive to such a suggestion: and the dramatist has taken some pains to show us, that Macbeth was *not less guilty* than his Wife.

Richardson has observed, in his *Philosophical Analysis* —

Habitual passions possess superior advantages over those opposite principles which operate by a violent and sudden impulse. For, so delicate is the constitution of the human mind, that lively feelings unless they form the temper of being confirmed by action, are enfeebled by repetition and frequent exercise. The horror and aversion excited by enormous wickedness, unless we act in conformity to them, “are mere passive impressions, which, by being repeated, grow weaker;”<sup>\*</sup> and though their resistance against an habituated passion be animated, it is of short duration. They subside; they are overwhelmed; but, not extinguished.

\* BUTLER'S *Analogy*.

Macbeth appears reconciled to the idea of treason; he can think of it calmly, and without abhorrence: and all the opposition he has henceforth to encounter, will arise, not from his *feelings*, but from reflection.

In Macbeth's soliloquy which follows shortly after his interview with Lady Macbeth, as already given, on p. 42, the dramatist has furnished us with Macbeth's reflections upon it; wherein, are masterly strokes of compunction. Macbeth ruminates on the villainy [not *villany*] of the contemplated deed, on the infamy which must necessarily follow it; and *honor* and *nature* assail him with that argument [not *argument*] of double force — [properly *douuble*]

He's here in double trust:

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
Who should against his murthurer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead, like Angels, trumpet-tongued, against  
The deep damnation of his taking-off:

And *pity*, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or, heaven's cherubim, horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That *tears* shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting *ambition*, which o'erleaps itself\* [\*not its *sell*  
And falls on the other\* — [\*suddenly broken off

—and this appeal to *nature*, *hospitality*, and *allegiance*, backed by the *dread* of the infamy which will attend it, produces such a powerful effect upon his mind, that, on Lady Macbeth's entrance [not *entrance* nor *ent'rance*] he says —

We will proceed no further in this business:  
He hath honored me of late; and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which *would* be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

—but, what a retort does this yielding to the impulses of his better nature, elicit from his Evil-angel —

Was the *hope* drunk,  
Wherein you dressed yourself? hath it slept since?

And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
 At what it did so freely? From this time,  
 Such I account thy love. Art thou afeared  
 To be *the same* in thine own act and valor,  
 As thou art in *desire*? Would'st thou have that  
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
 And live a coward in thine own esteem?  
 Letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*,  
 Like the poor Cat i'the adage?

Macbeth stands confounded before her reproaches at his cowardice; and she satirizes him so keenly, and heaps degrading interrogatories so rapidly upon him, that he readily catches hold of that One small, but precious fragment in the wreck of innocence and honor — *Pr'ythee, Peace!* thus demanding a truce from her attack, with the spirit of a combatant who has not yielded up his weapons. The words *pr'ythee peace*, are usually delivered, by Actors, as if they were mere expletives; but, Shakespeare did not so design them; they are not put in to *fill up* a sentence, they constitute one; they stand in an important pass; they defend the breach her awakened *ambition* had made in his citadel of *humanity*; they are (alas) the last utterance of that dignified struggle of his virtue, which so soon afterwards fell before her sophistry —

Pr'ythee, Peace!

I dare do all that may become a *Man*;  
 Who dares do more, is none!

She instantly changes her mode of attack —

What beast\* was't then, [\*not boast  
 That made you *break this enterprise to me*?  
 When you *durst* do it, then you were a *Man*;  
 And, to be more than what you were, you *would*  
 Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place,  
 Did then adhere, and yet, you would *make* both;  
 They have made themselves, and that, their fitness, now  
 Does unmake You!

Mark, interested reader, mark *the tact* of the dramatist: Lady Macbeth seeing that her husband was ensconced by *humanity* and *honor*, calls in *sophistry* to her aid; and, by a cunning and a ready turn, she gives him credit for his sentiment, but, erects a more glittering, though *fallacious* logic upon it; for, while admitting his objection, she *speciously* confutes it. After having thus skilfully parried his objection,

by a sophistry calculated to blind his reason and influence his ambition, she bursts out, in that vaunting display of hardened intrepidity, which presents one of the most terrific pictures ever drawn—and which has more than once rendered me breathless, while listening to their effusion from the lips of the never-to-be-forgotten Mrs. Siddons—

I have given suck; and know  
How tender 'tis to love the Babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dashed the brains out! had I so sworn,  
As you have done to this.

Macbeth fairly sinks under this attack, offering nothing in delay of execution, except the feeble hesitation given in the 4 words—

If we should fail ——

*Lady M.*

We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking place,  
And we'll not fail.

Now, patient reader, the fatal cause of Macbeth's fall was this—When he marshaled before him the *secondary* consequences of the contemplated crime and the *secondary* arguments against its commission, he lost sight of the *primary* question; which was that of the One step—the step from *innocence* into *guilt*; and losing sight of the primary, the real question, he fell before the sophistry of his wife. Another of Shakespeare's *moral lessons* to his auditors and readers. Under the influence of fatal prejudices, flattering himself with the hope of impunity, he engages to execute the black design. He becomes armed with an assumed ferocity, caught from Lady Macbeth—

I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

Away, and mock the time with fairest show;

False face must hide what the false heart doth know!

Agitated and shaken by tumultuous passions, his mind becomes both wild and sickly; and *reason*, beaming at intervals, increases the disorder—

Is this a *dagger* which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee—  
I have thee not; and yet, I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling, as to sight? or, art thou but



A dagger of the mind? a false creation,  
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
 As this which now I draw.  
 Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going,  
 And such an instrument I was to use.  
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses —  
 Or else, worth all the rest: I see thee still;  
 And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood;  
 Which was not so before — There's no such thing!  
 It is the bloody business which informs  
 Thus to mine eyes.

Immediately after the murder, he is amazed at his own atrocity; he is *then first* thoroughly conscious of his perfidy, and of the resentment it will excite. Terrific images are created by his fancy, and his soul is distracted by remorse.

*Macbeth.* I've done the deed—Didst thou not hear a noise?

*Lady M.* I heard the owl scream, and the crickets cry.

Did not You speak?

*Macbeth.* When?

*Lady M.* Now.

*Macbeth.* As I entered?

*Lady M.* Ay.

*Macbeth.* Hark—Who lies i' the second chamber?

*Lady M.* Donalbain.

*Macbeth.* (*Looking on his hands.*) 'This is a sorry sight—

*Lady M.* A foolish thought, to say *a sorry sight*.

*Macbeth.* There's one did laugh in his sleep,

And one cried *Murther!* that they did wake each other;  
 I stood and heard them: but, they did say their prayers,  
 And address'd them again to sleep.

*Lady M.* There are two lodged together.

*Macbeth.* One cried *God bless us!* and *Amen!* the other—

As they had seen me, with these hangman's hands.

List'ning their fear, I could not say *Amen*

When they did say *God bless us*.

*Lady M.* Consider it not so deeply.

*Macbeth.* But, wherefore could not I pronounce *amen*?

I had most need of blessing, and *amen*

Stuck in my throat.

*Lady M.* These deeds must not be thought

After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

*Macbeth.* Methought, I heard a voice cry *Sleep no more!*  
*Macbeth does murther sleep!* The innocent sleep;  
 Sleep that knits up the raveled sleave of care,  
 The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,  
 Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
 Chief nourisher in life's feast!

*Lady M.* What do you mean?

*Macbeth.* Still it cried *Sleep no more!* to all the house:  
 Glamis hath murdered sleep; and, therefore, Cawdor  
 Shall sleep no more! Macbeth shall sleep no more!

How different Richard! who never seems to enjoy himself except in the success, or prospect of success, in his villainies. There seems to be but a small portion of common *humanity* in the composition of Richard; he appears what Margaret called him —

Thou elvish-marked, abortive, rooting hog!

Thou that was sealed in thy nativity

The slave of nature and the son of hell!

—for, he is alike regardless of kindred and posterity, owning no fellowship with mankind; saying —

I have no Brother; I am like no brother;

And this word *love*, which graybeards call *divine*,

Be resident in men like one another,

And not in me — *I am myself alone!*

This "bottled spider," this "foul bunch-backed toad," perpetrates several murders; some in his passage to power, others after being seated on the throne. *Ferociousness* and *cruelty*, *deceit* and *hypocrisy*, are marked features in his portrait. Unlike Macbeth, Richard does not appear to have any humane or honorable principles to contend against — the murder of his brother Clarence, the murders of the Queen's kinsmen, the murder of the young Princes, of his Wife, of his accomplice Buckingham, are all perpetrated in the style of *hardened* cruelty — but, Macbeth possesses considerable sympathy; feels the dint of pity; experiences remorse; accounts the loss of honor, friends, and followers, among the *causes* which conspire to make him weary of life —

Oh, full o' scorpions is my mind, dear Wife!

and the dramatist has deeply interested us in Macbeth's approaching end, by casting over him a mantle of thoughtful, touching melancholy —

I have lived long enough! my way\* of life [\*not *May*  
 Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf:  
 And that which should accompany old-age —  
 As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
 I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
 Curses, not loud, but deep; mouth-honor, breath;  
 Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

— but, we have not any sympathy with Richard at the close of his career; he is hunted down, like a *wild-boar*, and we would *not* spare him, if we could.

It was with difficulty that Macbeth proceeded to the murder of Duncan; and after the deed was perpetrated, he was filled with horror and remorse; he regretted having seized the crown; and his remorse and regret were not a little augmented by the consideration of his inability to transmit the crown to his posterity —

For Banquo's *issue* have I 'filed\* my mind; [\**defiled*  
 For *them* the gracious Duncan have I murdered;  
 Put rancors in the vessel of my peace,  
 Only for *them*; and mine eternal jewel  
 Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make *them* Kings — the *seed of Banquo* kings!

— and, in the agitation of his thoughts, he seems to envy those whom he had so ruthlessly dispatched —

Better be with the Dead, [*place*  
 Whom we, to gain our peace,\* have sent to peace, [\*not  
 Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
 In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
 After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well;  
 Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
 Malice domestic, foreign levy — nothing  
 Can touch him further!

Macbeth then *becomes* hardened; callous and more callous, as he proceeds in guilt; his conscience becomes seared, as with a hot iron; he even surprises his wife with his bloody intentions —

Ere the bat hath flown  
 His cloistered flight; ere to black Hecate's summons  
 The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,  
 Hath rung night's yawning peal,  
 There shall be done a deed of dreadful note.

*Lady M.* What's to be done?

*Macb.* Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest Chuck,  
Till thou applaud the deed.

Thou marvest at my words: but, hold thee still;  
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.  
He had then determined upon murdering both Banquo and  
Fleance his son: but, on the escape of Fleance, Macbeth is  
thrown into consternation, and knows not what to do —

I will tomorrow,  
And betimes I will, unto the weird sisters;  
More shall they speak; for now, I am bent to know  
By the worst means, the worst: for mine own good  
All causes shall give way; I am in blood  
Stepped in so far, that, should I wade no more,  
Returning, were as tedious as go o'er!

At this advanced stage of his progress in wickedness,  
when Macbeth no longer requires the instigation, support,  
and watchfulness of his Wife; the dramatist prepares for  
her removal: and Lady Macbeth, lacking sufficient goads  
to action,

Is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest;

she walks and talks in her sleep; goes distracted, and dies;  
and He, on hearing the cry given by the women, is most  
characteristically made to say —

I have almost forgot the taste of Fears:  
The time has been, my senses would have cooled  
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair  
Would, at a dismal treatise, rouse and stir,  
As life were in't: I have supped full of horrors;  
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me. Wherefore was that Cry?

*Seyton.* The Queen, my lord, is — Dead.

*Macbeth.* She should have died hereafter!

There would have been a time for such a word —  
Tomorrow — and tomorrow — and tomorrow —  
Creeps in this petty pace\* from day to day, [\*not *space*  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our *yesterdays* have lighted fools  
The way to *dusty*\* Death! [not *dusky*

Poor Macbeth strives to drown reflection, by busily  
repelling the *consequences* of his evil deeds; he endeavors,  
in the contrivance of fresh crimes, to obliterate the remem-  
berance of the commission of the past; necessity drives him

on to new acts of violence; and he stands before us a signal example how hard it is to kick against the pricks—

I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun,  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone!

But, to Richard, cruelty and violence and crime, are heartfelt gratifications; he indulges in murder, as a passtime [not *pastime*]; he is a consummate villain, replete with wanton malice and cool-blooded malignity; there are no conflicting passions in his breast; in the turbulence of his projects, he maintains his self-possession—

I was born so high,  
Our aerie buildeth in the cedar's top,  
And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun!

Yet, *villain* as he is, Richard has not been cast by Shakespeare without the pale of humanity; he has not wholly lost his rank among *men*; he is still a human being. Notwithstanding Richard says,

I am in  
So far in blood, that sin will pluck on sin;  
Tear-falling pity dwells not in this eye—

yet, these very words show that he is *human* still. And after the Ghosts had all vanished, we find *humanity* is in him while soliloquizing thus—

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a several tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a *Villain*.  
Perjury, perjury, in the highest degree,  
Murther, stern murther, in the dir'st degree;  
All several sins, all used in each degree,  
Throng to the bar, crying all—*Guilty! Guilty!*  
I shall despair—There is no creature loves me;  
And if I die, no soul shall pity me—  
Nay, wherefore should they? since that I myself  
Find in myself no pity to myself!

—here are certain cords still binding him to *humanity*; he is not so *demoniacal* as Iago—nevertheless, Richard has not any such qualms of conscience as those experienced by Macbeth: we do not discover in Richard, what is so evident in Macbeth, that the way of transgressors is hard; for the dramatist has made Richard a character of *pure will*; he does not undergo any of those inward agitations which render Macbeth's mind like the tossing of the ocean

in a tempest; Richard seems, with a certain forced-composedness, to have said, in the phraseology ascribed to his Satanic majesty —

Evil, be thou *my good*!

MILTON.

But, not to out-weary my patient readers, by pursuing this analytical examination further, let me recommend an inquisitive perusal of the two dramas throughout; when you may discover other marked *similarities* and *differences* between Richard and Macbeth: those I have pointed out, may be sufficient to show Shakespeare's superiority as a *discriminating artist*; and this discrimination pervades the whole of his dramas; for, believe it or not, out of the 1,000 Characters represented by our master-dramatist, you cannot find 2 alike — they are, at least, as dissimilar as *the apparitions* which haunt Richard in his sleep only, and those which encounter Macbeth in his waking-dreams; and that is amply sufficient to stamp them with *unmistakable individuality*.

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### *Lady Macbeth.*

This sublime creation has not had justice done it, by Commentators and Critics on the writings of Shakespeare.

Lady Macbeth is not *the monster* usually depicted; she is not "the extreme opposite of Macbeth, destitute of a drop of the milk of human-kindness;" she is not "the least human of all Shakespeare's females;" Goneril and Regan surpass her in the quality of *inhumanity*, as far as Iago surpasses Richard in *villainy*: Lady Macbeth is a more terrific impersonation of evil passions and stupendous energies, but, she is not so far removed from *human* feelings and sympathies as the ingrates portrayed in Lear; she never tears herself so intirely away from her sex, from humanity; she is and remains *a woman*.

Richardson avers, in the work already quoted, on p. 43,

Lady Macbeth, of a character *invariably savage*, proceeds easily, and without reluctance, to the contrivance of the blackest crimes.

### *Illustration of Shakespeare's Characters.*

— but, such a Lady Macbeth is not to be found in Shakespeare; such a *monster* would not have suited his purpose. I really wish half of the Commentators had been asleep, instead of attempting to *illustrate* the Characters of the master-dramatist; for, they have done considerably more

harm than good: the Lady Macbeth of the discriminating Shakespeare, had the murder of Duncan *first* suggested to her mind by her husband, and she is ambitious less for herself than for him. Possessed of great power of intellect, inexorable determination, wonderful strength of nerve when she is once cast into the vortex of ambition, Lady Macbeth becomes more *active* than her husband; but, her activity is not so much attributable to her pre-eminence in wickedness, as to her superiority of mind. She urged him to the fatal deed, 'tis true; but, that sentence —

Had he not resembled —

*My father* as he slept, I had done't —

proves her *woman* still; proves she is not *that monster* of depravity some Critics would make her. After the murder, she does *not* “urge Macbeth on to the commission of new crimes;” nothing of the kind; she is sufficiently occupied in supporting the weakness of her conscience-stricken husband —

Why, worthy thane,

You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
So brainsickly of things —

My hands are of your color; but, I shame  
To wear a heart so white!

How now, my lord? Why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making?  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy,  
Should be without regard — what's done, is *done*!

Come on;

Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;  
Be bright and jovial 'mong your guests tonight.

O, proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your Fear;  
This is the air-drawn dagger, which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws, and starts,  
(Imposters to true Fear) would well become  
A woman's story, at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by the grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a *stool*.

You lack *the season* of all natures — Sleep.

— these, and other passages, show her superiority over her husband, in both intellect and fortitude.

Mrs. Jameson has, very properly, censured three of our critics (Cumberland, Richardson, Forster) for their false views of the Shakespearean character of his wonderful creation, Lady Macbeth —

I do deny that Shakespeare has represented Lady Macbeth a woman "*naturally cruel*," "*invariably savage*," or endued with "*pure demoniac firmness*," if ever there could have existed a woman to whom such phrases could apply — a woman without touch of modesty, pity, or fear — Shakespeare knew, that a thing so monstrous [*properly monstrous*] was unfit for all the purposes of Poetry. If Lady Macbeth had been *naturally* cruel, she needed not so solemnly to have abjured all pity, and called on the Spirits that wait on mortal thoughts to *unsex* her; nor would she have been loved to excess by a man of Macbeth's character; for, it is the sense of intellectual energy and strength of will, overpowering her feminine nature, which draws from him that burst of intense admiration —

Bring forth *men-children* only!

If she had been *invariably* savage, her love would not have comforted and sustained her husband in his despair; nor would her uplifted dagger have been arrested by a dear and venerable image rising between her soul and its fell purpose. If endowed with *pure demoniac firmness*, her woman's nature would not, by the *reaction*, have been so horribly avenged — she would not have died of remorse and despair.

*Characteristics of Women.* vol. ii. p. 37.

No, my readers, Shakespeare, the faithful Secretary of Nature, never penned such a monstrous Lady Macbeth as our self-baptized *Illustrators* of Shakespeare have made her.

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It has been asked — What could possibly have inspired Shakespeare with *thoughts and words* beyond the reach of any other man? A grave question, truly; and who shall answer it? Dr. Young (a very competent as well as reverend authority) informs us —

To claim attention and the heart invade,

Shakespeare but *wrote* the play the Almighty *made* —  
and it may be, the Doctor could have defended what some



of my readers may be disposed to designate, *an extravagantly impious assertion*. Be this as it may, I have thought it writ down in my duty, while exhibiting his *discriminating* ability, to show that our critical *Illustrators* (so-called) have done him gross injustice ; that, if possible, I may be the honored instrument of inducing some prejudiced mind to read Shakespeare himself, in preference to all Commentators and Critics and — Essayists ; for, it may be said of him, in his own words —

You, O you,  
So perfect, and so peerless, are created  
Of every creature's best !



## CHAPTER V.

*Continuation of Shakespeare as a Dramatist.*

Great Homer's birth *seven* rival cities claim —  
 Too mighty such monopoly of Fame.  
 Yet, not to *birth alone* did Homer owe  
 His wond'rous worth; what Egypt could bestow,  
 With all the Schools of Greece and Asia joined,  
 Enlarged the immense expansion of his mind:  
 Nor yet unrivaled the Mæonian strain;  
 The British Eagle\* and the Mantuan Swan [\*Milton  
 Tower equal heights. But, happier Stratford, thou  
 With uncontested laurels deck thy brow;  
 Thy Bard was thine *unschooled*, and from thee brought  
 More than all Egypt, Greece, or Asia taught;  
 Not Homer's self such matchless laurels won;  
 The Greek *has rivals* — but, thy Shakespeare none!

T. SEWARD.

Now, gentle reader, notwithstanding I have already occupied so much of your time on *Shakespeare as a Dramatist*, I cannot dismiss this subject without adding something more.

There is an incurable vulgar side of human nature, which, when he cannot help but show it, the Poet should never handle without a certain bashfulness; but, instead of this, Beaumont and Fletcher throw no veil whatever over nature. They express everything bluntly in words; they make the spectator the unwilling confidant of all, that more noble minds endeavor to hide even from themselves. The *indecencies* in which these poets indulged themselves, *go beyond conception*. Licentiousness of language, is the least evil; many scenes, nay, even whole plots, are *so contrived*, that the very idea, not to mention the beholding of them, is *a gross insult to modesty*. They were thoroughly acquainted with their cotemporaries; but they found it more convenient *to lower themselves* to the taste of the public, than to follow the example of Shakespeare, who *elevated the public to himself*. Aristophanes is a bold mouth-piece of sensuality; but, like the Grecian statuary in the figures of satyrs, &c.

he banishes them into the animal kingdom, to which they wholly [wholely] belong; and, judging him by the morality of his times, he is much less offensive than Beaumont and Fletcher. SCHLEGEL'S *Lectures*.

In respect of Shakespeare's great sense, Aristophanes's best wit, is *but buffoonery*; and, in comparison of Aristophanes's *freedoms*, Shakespeare writes with *the purity of a vestal*. Bishop WARBURTON.

If the *freedom* of some of the expressions used by Rosalind or Beatrice be objected to, let it be remembered that this was *not* the fault of Shakespeare or the women, but generally of the age. Portia, Beatrice, Rosalind, and the rest, lived in times when more importance was attached to *things* than to *words*; now, we think more of *words* than of *things*: and happy are we in these later days of super-refinement, if we are to be saved by our *verbal modesty*!

Mrs. JAMESON.

No one has ever combined, in an equal degree with Shakespeare, the double [double] character of an impartial observer and a man of profound sensibility. Superior to all, by his *reasons*, and accessible to all, by *sympathy*, he has nothing without judging it, and he judges it because he feels it. Could any one who did not detest Iago, have penetrated, as Shakespeare has done, into the recesses of his execrable character? To the horror with which he regards the criminal, must be ascribed the terrible energy of the language, which he puts into his mouth.

GUIZOT. *Shakespeare and his Times*. 1852. It has been the practice of Ben Jonson's biographers, to institute a comparison between Him and Shakespeare. These parallels have not been always "after the manner of Plutarch;" but indeed, their utility in any case will not be very apparent; unless it should be admitted, that Shakespeare is best set off, by throwing every object brought near him into the shade. *Shakespeare wants no light but his own*. As he never has been equaled, and in all human probability, never will be equaled, it seems an invidious employ, at least, to speculate minutely on the precise degree in which others fell short of him. Let him, with his own Julius Cesar, *bestride the narrow world*,

*like a colossus*; that is his due; but, let not the rest be compelled to *walk under his huge legs, and peep about to find themselves dishonorable graves.*

GIFFORD'S *Memoir of Ben Jonson.*

There is, occasionally, a coarseness of phrase, which must be attributed to the age in which he lived; but, he never tampered with Truth — never threw down the boundaries between vice and virtue — never strove by voluptuous images to excite the passions — nor by fallacious arguments to ensnare the mind, or confuse the intellect, upon any subject whatever.

BARRY CORNWALL, *on Shakespeare.*

These testimonies are highly favorable, and have been presented to my uninitiated readers, to promote a favorable impression regarding our great Dramatist; because, he is worthy of our admiration, our reverence, our esteem.

The *title* of this little work, I have made as attractive as I could, to induce the timid members of the *moral* and *religious* world to give it a reading; and as I expect to have several readers, both male and female, who know something less than nothing of the *dramatic* and *theatric* world, but who, in all probability, *think* they know much that is bad of Shakespeare, I have inserted, and shall yet insert, many favorable testimonies of his *greatness*, his *wisdom*, and his *goodness*, by way of counteracting, in some degree, the unfavorable impressions received from those who have ignorantly, or foolishly, or basely, prejudiced my readers against him.

I have already informed my attentive readers (on p. 10) that I was prejudiced against Shakespeare from infancy; I have *heard* much against him, and *read* much against him; and now, I have resolved to tell you, how He has been misunderstood, traduced, belied, and I and Others misled, cheated, and befooled.

I have neither time nor patience to wade through the mass of objections, charges, and censures, contained in the 550 pages of "An Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare; by W. J. Birch, M.A. 1848;" *because*, this Reverend gentleman has not seen Shakespeare with his own eyes, but through the spectacles of his oracle, Bell, the fabricator of that despicable biography of Shakespeare in "Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopædia:" I shall therefore pass the pupil (Birch) as being beneath the contempt of criticism,

and introduce his instructor (Bell) who shall speak for himself; as I am bound, in justice to Shakespeare, to my readers, and to myself, to produce and examine the blackest and worst charges that have been or can be brought against the Father of the English Drama.

In the *Lives of eminent Men*, you may read the following passage, bearing upon Shakespeare as a *Dramatist* —

Whoever has looked into the *original* editions of his dramas, will be disgusted with the *obscenity* of his allusions. They absolutely *teem with the grossest improprieties* — more gross *by far* than can be found in any cotemporary Dramatist. p. 99 and 100.

Patience, gentle reader, patience! be not alarmed; for, there is not a syllable of Truth in the whole quotation: it is

A Lie; an odious, damnèd Lie;

Upon my soul, a Lie; a wicked Lie! *Othello.*

and *how* such a scandalous, disgraceful, lying Biography of “the Genius of the British Isles,” found its way into a respectable publication, issued into the world by one of the most reputable firms in Paternoster Row, famous throughout Europe, known all over the world, I cannot conceive: it is a reproach to all connected with its dissemination; for, it is enough to blast the character of Shakespeare’s writings for ever, in the minds of the uninitiated; while those who know Shakespeare better, will be tardy in consulting a Cyclopædia of which it forms a part, and fearful of crediting other articles in the same work.

I think Knight treated the Biographer with too much *indifference*, when, in 1838, he wrote —

We do not mention this writer as attaching any value to his opinions; but simply, because he has contrived to put in a small compass all that could be raked together, *in depreciation of Shakespeare as a poet and as a man.*

*The Two Gentlemen of Verona.* p. 7.

— for, Knight was bound, *in duty to the public*, to expose the *false* assertions of Shakespeare’s asperser; to have *proved* him a calumniater; and not to have let him off with merely showing his contempt for his pitiable compilation —

‘The man that dares traduce, because he can

With safety to himself, is *not a Man!*

COWPER.

From Bell's insinuation, as base as it is false, we are to infer, that modern editions are *less obscene* than the original editions; that modest editors of later years, have left out such passages as are too revolting for the refined readers of our day: and how many lines do my readers suppose may possibly have been left out of modern editions, to render them fitting for this refined age? If the original editions "absolutely teem with the grossest improprieties — more gross by far than can be found in any cotemporary dramatist," as Bell asserts, then, more than the Half must have been expunged; as there are whole scenes of gross improprieties in the compositions of his cotemporaries. There are 37 Plays, each containing thousands of lines; to strike out 37 thousand lines would be like nothing, from such a mass of "gross improprieties;" yet, I am bold to assert, 37 hundred have not been struck out, nor 37 dozen, nor 37 lines; and if Bell had to go without his dinner untill he found the odd 7 struck out, he might fancy himself too harshly punished for the vileness of his insinuation. There are *three* in the first folio edition of Romeo and Juliet, which are not in the generality of modern editions; *two* of them bearing an allusion to what 99 readers out of 100 would not perceive on reading them; and *one*, like the *one* line in Richard III, prohibited under the Statute of James, forbidding the introduction of "sacred things" into works of imagination. James, like Bell, was no better than he should be; for, he could persecute his innocent subjects to Death, for the uncommittable crime of Witchcraft, at the same time that *his piety* forbade the printing of the following line —

By Christ's dear blood, shed for our grievous sins.

— James strained out [not *at*] gnats, but felt as little difficulty as BELL, BIRCH, & Co. in swallowing camels.

An *evil spirit* producing *holy witness*,

Is like a villain with a smiling cheek;

A goodly apple rotten at the heart —

O, what a goodly outside *Falsehood* hath!

*Measure for Measure.*

As to "the obscenity of his allusions," the implication is as dishonest as the Biographer is despicable; for, what is the fact? Several passages which are indeed *obscene* in Bell's bepraised modern editions, have not an iota of obscenity in the original folio which he so *unjustly* con-

demns. It was a piece of consummate impudence in Bell to attempt writing a Biography of Shakespeare, of whose works he was shamefully ignorant. I very much question his ever having read Shakespeare, and I am very sure he could not apprehend him. *Bell reading Shakespeare*, is equivalent to *a Cat looking in the Bible*, or (as the proverb is expressed in another tongue) *an Ape poring over Euclid*. If Bell had read Shakespeare for himself, he could not possibly have so misrepresented him; if he had taken the pains to compare the *original* with the *modern* editions, he would have known that later Editors have changed Shakespeare's *pure* words for words that are *impure*, Shakespeare's *delicacies* for downright *obscenities*; he would have known that —

Gently, gently; I must not insert the *proofs* which were about to flow from my pen; as this little work must not contain any expressions unfit to be read aloud in modest families. I may, however, communicate to my readers, that Dryden, when remodeling Troilus and Cressida, rendered a certain sly allusion in Shakespeare, *a revolting grossness*; that Theobald inserted *indecencies* which cannot be countenanced by either folio or quarto editions; that Steevens (as Knight has justly remarked) “gloated on a *double entendre*;” that these Bell-lauded editors *created obscenities* neither expressed nor designed by Shakespeare!

That the dramas of Shakespeare “absolutely teem with the grossest improprieties — more gross by far than can be found in any cotemporary dramatist,” is so diametrically opposed to Truth, that I half-suspect Bell must have been *hired* to pen the most disparaging and depreciating article he could *invent* on England's noblest son; for, not only Shakespeare's, but Ben Jonson's *indelicacies* “are as spots: while the *indelicacies* and *impurities* of their Cotemporaries, constitute the *essential coloring* to their portraits, sometimes spreading over intire scenes.”

Depend upon it, Bell never read Shakespeare, or he would have known, as well as Tweddell, that the great dramatist was “the firm friend of every virtue and accomplishment, the enemy of all that is vicious and unlovely.”

What Udall wrote in his Preface to the Apothegms of Erasmus, respecting Plutarch, may, with singular propriety, be applied to Shakespeare —

It is a thing scarcely believable, how much, how boldly, as well the common writers that, from time to time, have copied out of his works, as also certain [writers] that have thought themselves liable to controul and amend all men's doings, have taken upon them in this author; who ought, *with all reverence*, to have been handled of them, and, *with all fear*, to have been preserved from *altering, depraving, or corrupting*.

If you, gentle reader, had waded through as many different editions of Shakespeare, as have passed through my hands during the last 35 years, you would, perhaps, have as little patience as I have with his Tinkers, and be equally indignant at his Aspersers. Every editor — with perhaps but one honorable exception, Charles Knight — has *altered, depraved, and corrupted*, the text of Shakespeare; some in one way, some in another; each self-confident in his own peculiar superiority. Even Warburton (Bishop of Gloucester) who ought to have possessed more humility, corrupted the text, by altering it on points of theology — as if Shakespeare was not a better theologian than any mere Doctor of Divinity! In the original folio edition of Shakespeare's Works, p. 67, I read —

*Ang.* Your Brother is a forfeit of the Law,  
And you but waste your words.

*Isab.* Alas, alas:

Why all the soules that were, were forfeit once,  
And he that might the vantage best haue tooke,  
Found out the remedie: how would you be,  
If he, which is the top of Iudgement, should  
But iudge, you, as you are? Oh, thinke on that,  
And mercie then will breathe within your lips  
Like man new made. *Measure for Measure*. 1623.

— but, in Warburton's edition stands,

Why all the souls that *are*, were forfeit once,  
because, as he says, the expression in the text is *false divinity*. Well, certainly, a Doctor of Divinity *ought* to know better than I do, what is *true* and what is *false divinity*; yet, I cannot think he knew better than Shakespeare, who had not only read but thoroughly understood his Bible — which is more than I would venture to say of many learned Doctors; most of whom seem to be better acquainted with the Old than with the New Testament.



Warburton's ponderous quartos [not *quartos*] on the *Legation of Moses*, may, perhaps, entitle him to respect as a theologian; but Shakespeare was better read in *Christianity*, and knew and inculcated more of the doctrines, precepts, and sentiments of Christianity, than the learned Bishop of Gloucester. It was in his New Testament that Shakespeare learned to write —

Why all the souls that *were*, were forfeit once,  
for there it was he learned *the forfeit* had been *released*.  
But, not to annoy my readers with a theological disquisition, I shall dismiss this specimen of Warburton's impudence in changing Shakespeare's *were* into *are*, and then giving it to the world as Shakespeare's text. He had no moral right to *alter* the text. If Shakespeare's conception of Christ's *Redemption of the forfeit* of our first Parents, did not suit *the Doctor's divinity*, he might in a Note, have entered his Mosaic protest against the redeeming power of Christ, without corrupting the text of the dramatist, who (in well-known phraseology) had more Christianity in his little finger, than could be found in the Bishop's whole body.

The close of the quotation, *Like man new made*, standing, as it does, in immediate connection with Shakespeare's reference to the *redemption* of mankind by Christ, a reader of the Evangelists, one would suppose, must instantaneously associate with *the new birth*, the being "born again," the *regeneration*, so prominent in the New Testament; yet, on turning to the passage, in the Rev. H. N. Hudson's neatly "got up" American edition (which I possess "*as a great favor*") I am referred to a foot-note (on p. 51, vol. II.) given as a quotation, thus —

"You will then be as tender-hearted and merciful as the first man was in his days of innocence ;"

which, I take it for granted (knowing as I do, that the Americans have not yet acquired the Art of quoting accurately) is Hudson's mode of quoting Malone. But, inquisitive reader, is not this *mystifying* rather than *irradiating* Shakespeare? To me, any explanatory Note to *new made* would be a superfluity; as it cannot mean anything else than *made anew, born anew, born again*, in this passage; an expression, however puzzling to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, ought to have been familiar to the Rev. H. N. Hudson, A. M. an accredited Teacher of Christianity.

Thus it is, that the plain text, the obvious meaning, of Shakespeare, is distorted by Commentators and beclouded by Illustrators. Bishop Warburton bungles the Text, by his officious and unscriptural alteration; and the Rev. Mr. Hudson, who cannot perceive that Shakespeare alludes to the *regenerate* man, gallops off, after Malone, to associate the expression with the *first* man!

Poor Shakespeare, what a Martyr art thou, to Clerical officiousness!

The grand error in all our Commentators and Critics upon Shakespeare, is this — they do not approach him with *reverence* — “Chew upon this.”

I am here reminded of Johnson’s good sense, in checking and restraining his *alterations* of the text of Shakespeare, and of inserting his conjectures in the margin. He was of opinion, that “the history of our language, and the true force of our words, can only be preserved, by keeping the text of authors free from adulteration.

Conjecture, though it be sometimes unavoidable, I have not wantonly nor licentiously indulged. It has been my settled principle, that the reading of the ancient books is probably true, and, therefore, is not to be disturbed for the sake of elegance, perspicuity, or mere improvement of the sense. For, though much credit is not due to the fidelity, nor any to the judgment [better *judgement*] of the first publishers, yet, *they that had the copy before their eyes*, were more likely to read it right, than we, who read it only by imagination.

As I practised conjecture more, I learned to trust it less; and, after I had printed a few Plays, resolved to insert none of my own readings *in the text*. Upon this caution I now congratulate myself, for every day encreases [*increases*] my doubt of my emanations.

JOHNSON’S *Works*. vol. x. p. 185 — 188. Ed. of 1823.

But, strange to say, writers of the Female sex, though gifted with quicker *apprehension* than men, have repeatedly misconceived Shakespeare; and some of them have even disgraced themselves by actually *telling fibs* of him. The notable Mrs. Charlotte Lennox, for instance (like Bell, *anonymously*) has, in her so-called *Shakespeare Illustrated*, exerted her ingenuity to prejudice her readers against our *pure-minded* dramatist. Dunlop (in his *History of Fiction*)

has styled her “an acute and elegant critic;” but, I assure you, my fair readers, she is nothing of the kind; she is neither *acute* nor *elegant*; and, what is more, she is unworthy of confidence. Concerning *The Winter’s Tale*, she writes —

The original story of Greene, is *more purely moral* than that of Shakespeare.

And wherein, think you, consists this *lack of morality* in our greatest moral dramatist? Why, in Greene, the Father attempts to seduce his own Daughter; and because Shakespeare has omitted that disgusting incident, his *Female Illustrator* has publicly accused him of being less *purely moral*! But, so it is —

No might nor greatness in mortality

Can censure ’scape; back-wounding calumny

The whitest virtue strikes. *Measure for Measure.*

Shakespeare, you must know, selected some *well-known* Tales, Ballads, or Romances, for the subjects of his dramas; but, he did not think himself bound to adopt what he considered objectionable in the originals; no pecuniary advantages could induce him to become a pander to vice, to immorality, to indecency: yet, he has been so accused, over and over again, by his pseudo-illustrators, commentators, and biographers. See the harsh, the unjust critiques upon his having founded the Merchant of Venice “on a low and licentious model;” but, unlike Mrs. Lennox, Mrs. Jameson has carefully stated, that Shakespeare *threw out all the licentious part* of the model! This was a natural result of his refined taste. The Ophelia of our great Moral-philosopher, is a very different character to the female in the original story, notwithstanding the “Good-for-naught” would have been more to the taste of that libidinous age.

If, instead of believing the nonsense and lies, which such “coiners of scandal and clippers of reputation” as the anonymous LENNOX, BELL, & Co. may choose to *invent* and publish against Shakespeare, my readers would but examine for themselves the sources whence the Moral-dramatist took the groundworks of his plays, you would be constrained to acknowledge, that whatever he *altered* he *improved*, whatever he *touched* he *refined* —

Upon his brow, Shame is ashamed to sit!

Look at the *Kynge Johan*, written by no less a personage than Bishop Bale, “only 40 years before the time of

Shakespeare ;” then, look at the *John* of 1591 — two Plays well known to the public, when our Moral-philosopher produced his imperishable drama, wherein the *intolerance* of the furious protestant Bishop (Bale) against the Romish church, is softened and smoothed down, by the *fraternizing* spirit of the poet of humanity ; wherein the ribaldry exhibited in the offensive incident of Faulconbridge’s finding a Nun *concealed in an Abbot’s large chest of treasures*, is not allowed a place — to the disappointment of thousands of play-goers in that age, to the regret, I am sorry to record, of Thomas Campbell of our day · but, Shakespeare-like, that popular and much admired scene (of 1591) was not permitted to defile the text of our great moral teacher!

Again — look at the gentleness, kindness, goodness of our Shakespeare’s *Friar Laurence*, the confessor and friend of the unsullied Juliet ; how unlike the original ! In the old poem, we have a description of his “secret place,” and are told —

Where he was wont, in Youth, his *fayre frends* to  
There now he hydeth Romeus : [bestowe,

but here, as in the Abbot’s case, we find our Reformer of the public taste above lending his countenance towards fixing a stigma upon large classes of mankind, by indulging his auditors in a popular prejudice. In that intolerant and persecuting age, the magnanimous Shakespeare taught to contending sects and parties the virtues of *forbearance* and *conciliation* ; and we, as a people, are more beholden to the *humanizing* and *christianizing* dramas of the grossly misrepresented Shakespeare, than to all the sermons delivered by all the Doctors of Divinity then in possession of the pulpits !

It is deserving of remark, that Shakespeare, amidst the rancor of religious parties, takes a delight in painting the condition of a Monk, and always represents his influence as beneficial. SCHLEGEL’S 24th *Lecture*.

Now, honest reader, I hope you are prepared to admit, that Shakespeare has been misrepresented ; that he has been defamed, scandalized, and belied, by *poets, historians, and divines*, by *illustrators, commentators, and biographers*, male and female ; that he is not, never was “the abetter of immorality, the subverter of religion ;” but, on the contrary, that “he was the great *purifier* of the public taste,” the unswerving “champion of *humanity*,” and “the

firm friend of *every virtue and accomplishment*; the enemy of *all that is vicious and unlovely*." If any reader is not yet prepared to make these admissions, let him but keep his mind open to conviction, and not unreasonably resist the influence of *Truth* and undeniable *Facts*, and he shall yield full assent, before he has got through this essay — but,

A Manne convynsed agenst his Wille,

Is of the same opinyon stille !

— which adage was altered (not *improved*) by Butler, in the 3rd Canto of his *Hudibras* (a poem replete with bullion) into —

He that complies against his will,

Is of the same opinion still.

If asked, How is it, that Shakespeare has managed to impart to his Characters a *vitality* unknown to those of any other dramatist? I should reply, Shakespeare was a thorough *mental-ventriloquist*, who threw his imagination and expressions out of himself, into the various creatures he produced; whereby the words proceed direct out of the lips of his animated beings: he so completely transported his spirit into every character, that he was qualified, as the Plenipotentiary of the whole human race, to act and speak in the name and on the behalf of every individual; and hence it is, that each of his 1,000 characters has *its own*.

Shakespeare's *imagination* has been characterized, *the handmaid of nature*, as *nature was the playmate of his imagination*. He seems to have been each and all the Characters he portrayed —

And almost thence my Nature is subdued

To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

*Sonnet, III.*

In *The Friend*, vol. iii, p. 121, Ed. of 1837, Coleridge writes —

It is Shakespeare's peculiar excellence, that throughout the whole of his splendid *picture gallery* (the reader will excuse the acknowledged inadequacy of this metaphor) we find *individuality* everywhere — mere *portrait* nowhere. In all his various characters, we still feel ourselves communing with the same Nature which is everywhere present, as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes, odors. Speaking of *the effect*, that is, his works themselves, we may define the ex-

celence of their method, as consisting in that just proportion, that union and interpenetration of the *universal* and the *particular*, which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science.

And, although this passage has been uncourteously condemned, as an outpouring of "Coleridge's unmeaning fine words," it contains more than the ungracious censurer discovered; and I am pleased to see (in the *Studies of Shakespeare*) that it has not escaped the observant eye of Knight, who comments upon it, as follows —

Nothing can be more just and more happy than this definition of the *distinctive* quality of Shakespeare's works — a quality which puts them so immeasurably above all other works — "the union and interpenetration of the *universal* and the *particular*." It constitutes the peculiar charm of his matured style; it furnishes the key to the surpassing excellence of his representations, whether of facts which are cognizable by the understanding or by the senses; in which a single word individualizes the "particular" object described or alluded to, and, without separating it from the "universal" to which it belongs, gives it all the value of a vivid color in a picture, *perfectly distinct*, but also completely harmonious.

These are the right sort of Critics, my readers, these are the *true illustrators* of Shakespeare; worth a houseful and a cityful of the *maudlin illustrators* of the last century; they irradiate what they criticize, and illumine the occasional darkness of the text of their author; but, the *unqualified* Critics, who are incessantly thrusting themselves between Shakespeare and You, pointing out the spots upon the disk of our Sun of Dramatists, exhibit little else than the shadows of their own opacity; and, notwithstanding all their canting and sycophantic critiques, He will continue shining in undiminished splendor, ages and ages after they shall have passed into oblivion.

If Shakespeare deserves our admiration for his Characters, he is equally deserving of it for his exhibition of *Passion*, taking this word in its widest signification, as including every mental condition, every tone, from indifference or familiar mirth to the wildest rage and despair.

SCHLEGEL'S 23rd *Lecture*.

To the undying honor of Shakespeare be it recorded, he never glossed wild and blood-thirsty passions, with pleasing exteriors ; never clothed crime and want of principle, with false shows and greatness of soul ; his Characters are as faithful to life, as the characters in the Scriptures themselves : but, of which of the long list of his dramatic successors, can the like be said, with equal truth ? Twice he has depicted downright *villains* ; and the masterly manner in which he managed to elude certain points of too painful and too revolting a cast, may been seen and admired in his Iago and Richard. Coleridge has remarked, with his usual penetration —

Keeping at all times in the highroad of life, Shakespeare has no innocent adulteries, no interesting incests, no virtuous vice ; he never renders that amiable which *religion* and *reason* teach us to detest, or clothes impurity in the garb of virtue, like Beaumont and Fletcher, the Kotzebues of the day.

*Notes and Lectures upon Shakespeare.*

It is, my readers, to the credit of the present age, that we have some souls vast enough, deep enough, multiform enough, to communicate to us some adequate notions of the dimensions — the length and breadth and height and depth of that huge structure of truth and beauty, the myriad-mind of Shakespeare —

The Bard of every age and clime,  
Of genius fruitful, and of soul sublime ;  
Who, from the flowing mint of Fancy, pours  
No spurious metal, fused from common ores,  
But gold, to matchless purity refined,  
And stamped with all the godhead in his mind ;  
He whom I feel — but want the power to paint !

GIFFORD.

Goethe, who had his own peculiar views of “the gigantic dramatist of England,” very prettily, and also very aptly, likened Shakespeare’s characters to *watches with crystalline plates and cases* ; which, while they point out the hours and minutes as correctly as other watches ; enable us to perceive their *inner springs and movements*.

Having, as I trust, sufficiently exemplified both the *variety* and *diversity* of the Characters to be found in the Library of Shakespeare’s Works, I may venture to add —

Either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, or,  
 pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, or,  
 tragical-comical-historical-pastoral,  
 Shakespeare is your only man ! He tramples insurmounta-  
 bles under his feet, and shakes off impossibilities, like dew-  
 drops from a lion's mane !

Yes, Master of the human heart, we own  
 Thy sovereign sway, and bow before thy throne !

In Ages far remote, when Albion's state  
 Hath touched the mortal limit, marked by Fate ;  
 When Arts and Science fly\* her naked shore, [*\*flee*  
 And the world's Empress shall be great no more :  
 Then, Australasia shall thy sway prolong,  
 And her rich cities echo with thy song ;  
 There, myriads still shall laugh, or, drop the tear,  
 At Falstaff's humor, or, the woes of Lear :  
 Man, wave-like, following man, thy powers admire,  
 And thou, my Shakespeare, reign till time expire !

*Newstead Abbey,*  
 Aug. 4th, 1825.

C. S.  
 [Charles Symmons, D.D.]

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## CHAPTER VI.

*Shakespeare as a Moral-philosopher.*

Shakespeare had none to imitate, and is himself inimitable. JOHN DENNIS.

As a Moral-philosopher, Shakespeare stands at the head of all our writers; for, *his philosophy* will he found, on examination, to consist in *commonsense* improved by experience and observation, which he has reduced into *maxims* by reflection and inference, for our better conduct in life.

It has been said of our great philosopher, by way of depreciation — “Shakespeare was not of the School of Aristotle;” true, most truly [truly] said: Shakespeare’s philosophy was of a higher, more extensive, profounder cast: he was not a *learned* (taught) but a *natural* (intuitive) Philosopher —

He knew all qualities, with a learned spirit. *Othello.*  
and when you, gentle reader, shall make Shakespeare your *study*, you will discover lofty philosophy among his everyday occurrences, moral lessons in the company of princes, peasants, and pickpockets, and sublime poetry intermingled with chit-chat and gossiping —

The strawberry grows underneath the nettle;  
And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best

Neighbour’d by fruit of baser quality. *Henry V.*

— you will find him philosophizing on all occasions; where and when no other author would have ventured or thought upon it — as, for instance in the terrific storm, at the time the mental powers of Lear were falling into ruins, in the company of the Fool and mad Tom; when Glo’ster wishes to conduct him out of the storm and take him “where both fire and food is ready,” Lear says, in allusion to Edgar (as Mad Tom)

First let me talk with this philosopher —

What is the cause of thunder?

It has been petulantly asked, *What did Shakespeare know? what could he know?* It might more appropriately be asked, What did he *not* know? He certainly knew many things of which his petulant querists were lamentably ignorant; and he knew many things of which thousands of his readers are not aware of his knowledge — from lack of

penetration, or, quickness of apprehension. I am persuaded 99 out of 100 of my readers, though they may have read Shakespeare during 10 or 20 years, are not aware of *his knowledge* of the heavens and the earth, in a variety of particulars. He knew, for instance, as well as any Astronomer of our day, the distinct locality and prerogative of *the polar star*, of which he wrote —

*Cæs.* I could be well mou'd, if I were as you,  
If I could pray to mooue, Prayers would moouc me:  
But I am constant as the Northerne Starre,  
Of whose true fixt, and resting quality,  
There is no fellow in the Firmament.  
The Skies are painted with vnnumbred sparkes,  
They are all Fire, and euery one doth shine:  
But, there's but one in all doth hold his place.  
So, in the World; &c.

*Iulivs Cæsar.* p. 119. Ed. of 1623.

Did it ever strike you, my inquiring reader, that Shakespeare knew anything about the *doctrine of fluxions* — respecting which Newton was so much laughed at (in 1665) before he received plaudits for his communications? You have, perhaps, read, in different Plays, Shakespeare's expression of the *moist star* (the *moon*) but, did you perceive the latent knowledge which was embodied in the expression? Can you now discover anything new in the following passage —

In the most high and palmy state of Rome  
A little ere the mightiest Iulius fell  
The graues stood tennantlesse, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeake and gibber in the Romane streets  
As starres with trains of fire, and dewes of bloud  
Disasters in the Sunne; and the moist starre,  
Vpon whose influence Neptunes Empier stands,  
Was sick almost to doomesday with eclipse.

4to. Ed. of 1611. GARRICK'S *Copy*.

By the bye, in connection [not *connexion*] with Newton, most people think of his discovery of *gravitation*. You have often read and heard of that pretty little anecdote about his lying under a tree, poring on *gravity*, when an Apple fell, which not only struck him on the head, but struck into his apprehension *the tendency of things towards the centre of the earth*; and that it was to the fall of the Apple he was indebted for *his* discovery of gravitation. Now,

I do not wish to insinuate that Newton did not discover *gravity*; I believe he did; and others may yet *discover* it: but, *gravitation* was perfectly well known to Shakespeare, before Newton was born, which was on Christmasday 1642; for, I read in the folio edition of our great philosopher's Works, published in 1623 —

*Cres.* ————— time, orce\* and death [\*force]

Do to this body what extremitie you can;  
But the strong base and building of my loue,  
Is as the very *Center of the earth*,  
*Drawing all things to it.*

*Troylus and Cressida* [without Act, Scene, or Page]

Now, where did Shakespeare learn this? certainly not from Newton. Had Newton read Shakespeare with an observant eye and philosophic understanding, he might, from *learning the tendency of things towards the centre of the earth*, earlier than 1666 have *discovered universal gravitation* — that *all bulky and weighty bodies*, even the Earth and all the Planets (within our Sun's sphere) *tend towards the centre of the Sun*.

Hume and others have represented Shakespeare, as not having had "any instruction, either from the world or from books;" how, then, it may be asked, *did he become a Microcosm of Knowledge?* for, no man, that I am aware of, ever knew so much. But Hume, with all his pretensions to the appellation of *philosopher*, had the knack of writing Nonsense. That Shakespeare felt the advantages of *Study* as well as its gratifications, we know from his writings; take one proof from among many — the advice given by Tranio to Lucentio:

*Me Pardonato*, gentle master mine:

I am in all affected as your selfe,

Glad that you thus continue your resolute,  
To sucke the sweets of *sweete Philosophie*.

Onely (good master) while we do admire

This vertue, and this morall discipline,

Let's be no Stoickes, nor no stockes I pray,

Or so deuote to Aristotles checkes \*

[\*ethics]

As Ouid; be an out-cast quite abiur'd:

Balke Lodgicke with acquaintance that you haue,

And practise Rhetoricke in your common talke,

Musicke and Poesie vse, to quicken you,

The Mathematickes, and the Metaphysickes

Fall to them as you finde your stomacke serves you :  
 No profit growes, where is no pleasure tane :\* [*\*ta'en*,  
 In brieft sir, studie what you most affect.

*Taming of the Shrew.* p. 210. Ed. of 1623.

But, gentle reader, there has been, and still continues to be, so much *cant* delivered from our Pulpits and issued from the Press, on the *immorality* of Shakespeare's plays, that the Title prefixed to this essay, will be quite sufficient, for many readers, to question *my notions of morality*, to suspect they are not what they ought to be — or, that I do not clearly apprehend *what morality is* : I shall, therefore, briefly examine a few of the formidable accusations arraigned against our great Moral-philosopher ; and, if I do not prove him a greater, a nobler, a purer, a more christian Moralist, than are the very writers who have charged him with gross immorality — nay, if I do not prove to the satisfaction of my most fastidious readers, that Shakespeare's *sentiments* are more in unison with the precepts of the New testament, than are the *doctrines* preached by the generality of our Pulpit-orators in 1854, I trust some of our ready-penmen who “watch the immoral fruits of the Press, for the public good,” may have the manliness publicly to expose my false-notions, and indignantly shower down their Anathemas upon me, for this my unwarrantable attempt to raise Shakespeare unduely [not *unduly*] in public estimation.

During the half-century that I have been crawling about on this nether world, I have scores of times heard Ministers, of various denominations, condemn Shakespeare from the pulpit ; and I have still more frequently heard them exerting their influence in private, to prevent Shakespeare's being read in the closet — but, *Why* have they taken such pains to utter their ostracisms against our great Moralist ? *Why ! because*, as they say, *Shakespeare is an immoral Writer*. But, is it true ? I have read him, “again and again,” and though I formerly fancied, with the well-meaning Cecil [see p. 5] that “Shakespeare had a low and licentious taste,” I now not only deny the imputation, but, I retort the opprobrious charge ! After having read Shakespeare for myself, I fearlessly maintain, that whoever fancies Shakespeare to be a propagater of *immorality*, has never read him — or, does not apprehend him. Shakespeare *immoral* in his sentiments — Nonsense ! there is more of the *essence of morality* (not Jewish, but Christian morality) in

Shakespeare's dramas, than in half the sermons preached in London from year's end to year's end !

It behooves me here to state, clearly and definitely, that I can say, as cordially and conscientiously as Cowper —

*I venerate the man whose heart is warm,  
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,  
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof  
That he is honest in the sacred cause.  
To such I render more than mere respect,  
Whose actions say, that they respect themselves.*

*The Time-piece.*

— therefore, let no reader lightly charge me with *lack of reverence* for Pulpit-teachers ; yet, as the best of men, are *but men* at the best, I respect Truth still more.

I am perfectly aware, that the great mass of Voices in “the religious world,” are against me ; but, as Coriolanus says —

I'll give my reasons,  
More worthier\* than their voices. [\*not worthy

In the Two Gentlemen of Verona, when Proteus says,

My shame, and guilt, confounds me !

Forgive me Valentine ! If hearty sorrow

Be a sufficient ransom for offense,

I tender it here ; I do as truly\* suffer [\*better truly

As e'er I did commit !

the dramatist makes Valentine reply —

Then I am paid ;

And once again I do receive thee honest :

Who by *repentance* is not satisfied,

Is nor of heaven, nor earth ; for, these are pleased ;

By *penitence* the Eternal's wrath's appeased.

Yet, such is the morality of our dramatist's accusers, they would *not* have forgiven Proteus ; they insist on what they call “the moral necessity of his being condemned to the galleys, if not to death :” but, I appeal to you, just reader, if Shakespeare's treatment of the Penitent is not more *christian-like* ? The great Moralist remembered what his Reverend accusers seem to have forgotten, that the Founder of Christianity had emphatically declared —

If ye forgive men *their* trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but, if ye forgive *not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive *your* trespasses.

Angelo, in *Measure for Measure*, our Mosaic moralists would, very piously, have *decapitated*, "as a just retribution," had they possessed the power of the Duke—

O, it is excellent

To have a giant's strength; but, it is *tyrannous*

To use it like a giant!

still, the carper Dennis contends, that

Shakespeare has been wanting in the exact distinction of poetical justice;

and the clerical commentator on this remark, adds —

Certainly, Shakespeare has egregiously failed, in not punishing Angelo according to his desert:

but, what says Hamlet —

Use every man after his *desert*, and who shall 'scape Whipping?

Our revengeful moralists think Leontes, in the *Winter's Tale*, "very inadequately punished for his jealousy," by 16 years of sorrow and repentance; they would have exacted more; but, the generous Shakespeare, thought

*Kindness* nobler ever than *Revenge*!

Iachimo, in *Cymbeline*, is not, forsooth, treated with what our great Moralists's carping critics designate "poetical and moral justice," when Posthumus says —

Kneel not to me;

The power that I have on you, is — *to spare you*! the calumniators of Shakespeare would *not* have spared Iachimo; for, they are enamored of *vengeance* and love not *mercy*; they are not admirers of that quality which

Is an attribute to God himself;

they are not of Shakespeare's opinion, that

Earthly power doth *then* show likest God's,

When Mercy seasons Justice.

Shakespeare, we have been told (over and over, and, provokingly, over again) "sacrifices Virtue to convenience;" that when the magician Prospero, in *The Tempest*, releases his brother and followers, "whom justice and morality alike, would have severely punished, Shakespeare commits an unpardonable breach of propriety:" but, here again, these canting moralists have intirely overlooked that grand qualifying property — *penitence*! These churlish, though "reverend" forsakers of the precepts of Christ, for the barbarous laws of Moses, would have visited the sins of these Penitents upon *them* and their *innocent* children —

ay, down to the third and fourth generation! How much more christian-like has the defamed Moral-philosopher dealt with them —

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the  
Yet, with my nobler *reason* 'gainst my *fury* [quick,  
Do I take part: the rarer action is  
In *virtue* than in *vengeance*: being *penitent*,  
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend  
*Not a frown further* — Go, release them Ariel.

Such, gentle reader, are the sentiments, such the morality, such the christianity of the much slandered Father of the English Drama! and so repeatedly has our great Moralist adopted the qualities of *forbearance* and *mercy* and *forgiveness* — repudiating, with Christ, the qualities of *retribution* and *revenge* and *vengeance*, inculcated by Moses, that sycophantic moralists have roundly asserted and continue to assert, have libelously printed and continue to print —

Shakespeare sacrifices Virtue to convenience;  
He had no moral purpose in view;  
Shakespeare has wofully countenanced Crime;  
He was a subverter of Justice;

The Plays of Shakespeare testify, that he never discovered the existence of Retributive-justice;

Shakespeare was a pander to immorality and a promoter of licentious wickedness:

with a host of similar charges — *all equally false!*

At the present time, it seems somewhat fashionable among our Pulpit-orators, outrageously to inveigh against "Shakespeare's disregard of *retributive* justice;" which is echoed from church to church and chapel to chapel; but —

Oh, this work

Of *retribution* in a Human hand —

'Tis *havoc* and *not justice!*

they sternly demand, with that wonderfully great man, the semi-civilized Moses, "an Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth;" but, the more humane and christianized Shakespeare asks —

How shalt thou *hope* for Mercy, rendering none?  
they teach and preach "the necessity of a rigorous scrupulosity in dealing with Evil-doers;" but, they lose sight of the frailties of Human-nature — Shakespeare's principle being, "Overcome evil with good:" they protest against

Shakespeare's "want of moral severity, in punishing the committers of moral enormities;" but, our compassionate Moral-teacher asks these Reverend complainants —

If, when you make your Prayers,

God should be so obdurate as yourselves,

How would it fare with your departed souls?

they exclaim against Shakespeare's "loose morality and his most irreligious levity;" and, moreover, tell us, that "He is a corrupter of morals, through his flagrant neglect of the claims of justice:" but, mark what our more christianized moralist says to such aspersers of his sentiments —

Though *justice* be thy plea, consider this:

That, in the course of Justice, none of us

Should see *salvation*; we do pray for Mercy,

And that same prayer doth teach us all to *render*

*The deeds of Mercy!* *Merchant of Venice.*

Quoting this passage, calls to my remembrance [not *remembrance* nor yet *rememb'rance*] a string of caviling and silly critiques upon the impropriety of Shakespeare's having placed such words and sentiments in the speech of Portia, addressed to a Jew — but, I shall not inflict upon my readers the perusal of so much trash as is contained in their exhibitions of *Shakespeare's inconsistencies*. They say, Shakespeare refers to *the Lord's Prayer*, and they then laugh at him for his incongruity in referring to that prayer when addressing Shylock, a Jew. How do they know that he was referring to the Lord's Prayer? I rather think he had a very different part of the Bible in his mind's eye, when penning that beautiful speech, though the Lord's Prayer may have been present at the same time. And admitting, that the allusion was to the Lord's Prayer, and to nothing else than the Lord's Prayer; what then? Hugo Grotius knew — and you may rely upon it, Shakespeare knew it before him, that every sentence and member of a sentence in the Lord's Prayer, is to be found in the Old Testament, and that the Lord's Prayer does not contain a single expression or thought, which was not familiar to the Jews, *before* the birth of Christ. Wherein, then, is the incongruity? But, enough!

As a specimen of Shakespeare's sense of "the existence of retributive-justice," take Buckingham's Confession, on his being led to execution, by the orders of his vile accomplice in wickedness, the consummate villain Richard —



This is the Day, which, in king Edward's time,  
I wished might fall on me, when I was found  
False to his Children and his Wife's allies:

This is the day wherein I wished to fall  
By the false faith of him whom I most trusted:

This, this All-soul's-Day, to my fearful soul,  
Is the determined respite of my wrongs.

That high All-seer which I dallied with, [ables

Hath turned my feign'd prayer\* on my head, [\*2 syl-  
And given in *earnest* what I begged in *jest*.

Thus doth He force the swords of wicked men

To turn their own points on their Masters' bosoms:

this, and similar passages, prove Shakespeare's *sense* of what his accusers (BELL & Co.) call "his want of *retributive justice*."

Though Shakespeare never varnished Crimes, he was not fond of portraying his criminals as *monsters*, in the strict acceptation of the word; for, with the exception of Goneril, Regan, and Iago, I do not, at this moment, remember another, among his 1,000 characters, which he placed outside the pale of Humanity: he was not so ready as many of our Reverends of the present day, to place erring, naturally and constitutionally erring beings, beyond the reach of *mercy* and *forgiveness*; he delighted in showing that eminently bad men, were still *human*; he respected Humanity too much, to cut off his sinful characters without Hope — though he has given us a terrific death-bed scene of Cardinal Beaufort, at the close of 3rd Act of 2nd Part of Henry VI — and even that apparently hopeless case, has a tincture of Shakespeare's humanity in it —

*Warwick*. So bad a death, argues a monst'rous life.

*King*. Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all!

It is evident, throughout the writings of our dramatist, that however much he detested Crime — which, unlike other dramatists, he never represented as a Virtue — he cherished an unwonted share of pity for the Criminal: he seems to have been fully convinced, that poor, frail beings, might be sent to better places than hell; that eternal damnation, unquenchable fire, devils, and damned spirits, were not the most alluring topics to comment upon, nor in any-wise calculated to raise the beneficent Governor of the the universe, in the estimation of his fallen family of Man; he seems to have had a *true christian appreciation* of the

morality of Moses, which, in London, is so much more preached up in 1854, than the morality of Christ — which is now decidedly unfashionable.

One of our professed admirers of Shakespeare, recently introduced him at the close of a sermon “got up for a fashionable auditory,” as “the greatest poet of England;” and, among other things, said —

Like all other Sceptics, his religion was, at best, an irreligious presumption on God and goodness. He reposed in his own powers, without any reliance on Providence, whom he never acknowledges. He had an aspiring genius, but groveling morals. I admire his talent, but, condemn his principles!

—these words were taken down at the time they were uttered, and I vouch for their accuracy. Shakespeare assures us —

There is some soul of goodness in things *evil*,  
Would men observingly distil it out;

but, really, I am not disposed to distil such incongruities; they remind me of Bassanio's compliment —

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of Nothing; more than any man in all Venice: his reasons are two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

Such incongruous Critics, seem not to have read Shakespeare either backwards or forwards, but, in some other and inexplicable direction; for, as Bailey, in his letter to his son (the bold author of *Festus*) on *Knowledge is Power*, after regretting how few the number of writers, whose Knowledge can be truly [*truly*] said to have conferred Power, has observed —

Even Shakespeare himself, splendid and surprising as are his powers of invention and description, would, I am persuaded, have sunk before the moral sense of enlightened and impartial posterity, had his writings been destitute of *those impressive moral lessons*, and *piquant moral maxims*, with which they now so copiously abound; and which distinguish them above all other writings of their peculiar class, as much as they are distinguished by lofty and commanding genius.

*Recreations in Retirement.* 1836.

An observant reader of Shakespeare needs not to be reminded how frequently he impresses upon us, in the plainest terms —

There's a *special* Providence in the fall of a Sparrow!

*Hamlet.*

He does not *obtrude* religion upon his auditors and readers, like a dogmatic sectarist, but places it unostentatiously and naturally before them; as when Belarius teaches the young Princes to address their orisons to Heaven —

See Boys, this gate

Instructs you how to adore the Heavens; and bows you  
To a morning's holy office. *Cymbeline.*

— a splendid sermon, without preachification; a graceful and unaffected spirit of devotion! A like religious feeling breathes through the whole of this admirable drama, which is replete with moral and religious lessons. It is in this play, that the lovely Imogen (who moves like a spirit of light) insists on her companions not remaining at home with her, though she is, confessedly, "very sick;" urging a philosophic reason for their going —

So please you, leave me;

Stick to your *journal* course: the breach of Custom,  
Is breach of all!

What a comprehensive lesson in 2 lines! Let Critics laugh as they please, at "such trite and common-place lessons;" under the superintendence of Providence, I trust largely to *Custom*, on which lawgivers and schoolmasters and parents, in all ages and nations, have safely placed much reliance; for (as Brougham has somewhere stated) Custom not only makes many duties easy, but, it throws difficulties in the way of deviations from duty: the Custom of sobriety makes intemperance disagreeable; the Custom of prudence renders profligacy obnoxious; the Custom of virtue causes vice to be revolting.

Shakespeare has repeatedly inculcated this in his writings; as when, in *Hamlet*, he tells us vice may be subdued by habit —

That monster, *custom*, who all sense doth eat —

Of *habits* devil — is angel yet in this:

That to the *use* of actions fair and good

He likewise gives a frock, or livery,

That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight;\* [not to-night

And that shall lend a kind of easiness

To the next abstinence: the next more easy;  
 For *use* almost can change the stamp of nature,  
 And master the devil, or throw him out  
 With wond'rous potency.

Though some of our great talkers and pseudo-philosophers have attempted to turn Custom into ridicule, and pretended to pity those who place confidence in matured habits, I am bound to believe, from what I have seen and observed for upwards of half a century, that if you, gentle reader, accustom a child to a sacred regard for *truth*, a respect for the *property* of others, a *humane* disposition towards insects and animals, that child cannot, without considerable difficulty, become guilty of *lying*, *theft*, or *cruelty* — hence the philosophy as well as morality of that adage which has been admired for 3,000 years —

Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Our observant philosopher has also taught us, that *wisdom* and *folly* are contagious —

*Falstaff*. It is certain, that either wise bearing, or ignorant carriage, is taught as men take diseases — one of another: therefore, let men take heed of their company.

— and he has made a like observation as to *virtue* and *vice* —

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see  
 Thy honorable metal may be wrought  
 From that it is disposed — therefore, 'tis meet  
 That noble minds keep ever with their likes;  
 For, who so firm that cannot be seduced?

Shakespeare abounds with these philosophically-moral and naturally-religious lessons; yet, many of his readers, and some of his professed admirers, have never discovered that he was a Moral-philosopher!

Johnson (whom Knight undervalues) informs us, on p. 135 of the 10th vol. of his sterling works —

Shakespeare is, above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of Nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or, by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary

opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept; and it may be said of Shakespeare, that from his works may be collected a *system of civil and æconomical* [economical] *prudence*. Yet, his real power is not shewn [shown] in the splendor of particular passages, but, by the progress of his fable, and the tenor of his dialogue: and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who, when he offered his house for sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.

In this same instructive tragedy (Cymbeline) when the Queen wishes to disguise her motive for procuring *poison* from the Doctor, saying —

I will try the forces

Of these thy compounds, on such creatures as

We count not worth the hanging — but none human;  
the reply of Cornelius not only conveys a tacit reproof of her hypocrisy, but (what Shakespeare never lost sight of) it furnishes a fine lesson of *humanity* —

Your highness

Shall from this practice, but *make hard* your heart.

I never read of our horrible *christian* massacres of the Heathens (such as have been so graphically described by General Gough) without being reminded of York's words—

That had not God, for some wise purpose, *steeled*

The hearts of men,

our deluded countrymen,

must, perforce, have melted,

And barbarism itself have pitied them. *Richard II.*

As to Shakespeare's "irreligious presumption," why, He emphatically taught his auditors to place their trust in God and *not* in Princes; and was careful in cautioning them against presumptuous confidence, lest, like Cardinal Wolsey, they might be brought to exclaim —

Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
 I served my King, He would not in mine age  
 Have left me naked to mine enemies! *Henry VIII.*

On the charge of Shakespeare's having "immorally robbed the Law of its legitimate prey," and of his having "stolen away the forfeits of justice," it may be sufficient for the readers of this essay, to quote the words of his own pure-minded Isabella, in her appeal to Angelo —

Why, all the souls that *were*, were forfeit once;  
 And He who might the 'vantage best have took,  
*Found out the Remedy.* How would You be,  
 If He who is the top\* of judgement, should [\*not God  
 But judge You *as you are*? O, think on that;  
 And Mercy, then, will breathe within your lips,  
 Like man *new made*.\* [\*In scripture, "*born again*."

Such, gentle reader, is the language of our grossly aspersed, our inexcusably misrepresented and belied Shakespeare; such the *quality* of that humanely religious principle He so zealously and eloquently inculcated in his imperishable and instructive dramas — that *godlike quality*, which

Droppeth, as the gentle rain\* from heaven [\**dew*  
 Upon the place beneath! It is twice blessed;  
 It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:  
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes  
 The throned Monarch better than his crown —  
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
 The attribute to awe and majesty,  
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of Kings;  
 But Mercy is above this sceptred sway,  
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
 It is an attribute to God himself;  
 And earthly power doth then show *likest* God's,  
 When Mercy seasons Justice. *Merchant of Venice.*

Shakespeare, be it remembered, lived in an age when the *vindictive* passions were raging among Sects and Parties in England. Slitting up Noses, boring Ears with hot irons, chopping off Hands, striking off Heads — Hanging, Emboweling alive, Burning fellow-creatures (men, women, and children) for what was called *religious opinion*, were things then common, and quite familiar to the minds of Shakespeare's auditors and readers: and, in my judgement, no reader can duely appreciate the moral courage, the un-

daunted bravery, the indomitable magnanimity of soul, which Shakespeare possessed, without *first* making himself acquainted with the pervading spirit and bloody results of that blindly extolled, that frightfully persecuting period.

Some years back, I was at the pains of running through the age in which Shakespeare lived; I copied out the most striking events that occurred during his lifetime; commencing with the year of his Birth, 1564, and writing down the monstrosities, in rotation, to the year of his Death, 1616: and my readers may believe me when I state, that not merely dozens and scores, but that hundreds and thousands of his cotemporaries suffered *imprisonment, laceration, or death*, who never said, wrote, or did things, so offensive against the persecuting Bigots then in power, as the One man Shakespeare — and yet, He escaped unhurt! not a hair of his head was injured! Thousands, whose combined offenses fell short of the censures and reproaches and condemnations contained in the dramas of Shakespeare, were hurried to prison, to the stake, the block, or the gallows; while He not only escaped persecution, but was *countenanced, honored, esteemed*, by both the blood-thirsty monarchs, Elizabeth and James!

If we inquire, Why was not Shakespeare persecuted, and imprisoned, and tortured, and put to death? Who shall answer! I would not attempt to find out any other answer, than simply — Heaven itself had “made a hedge about him, about his house, and about all that he had on every side.

Persecution constituted a prominent part of the Theology which was preached from the pulpits in the time of Shakespeare; and he, clearly perceiving that it was *not* Religion, but the lack of it, which caused those outrages on humanity, impregnated his dramas with the civilizing and fraternizing spirit of Christianity, and sedulously propagated the neglected principles of *tolerance* and *conciliation*, breathing into his Plays sentiments and feelings which might counteract the fatally mischievous outpourings of the deluded pulpit-teachers. And I am of opinion, gentle reader, that had not the humanizing and christianizing writings of Shakespeare and his followers, *created* a new public-opinion in England, 1850 might have witnessed equally intolerant and frightful spectacles as those which characterize the bloody-reigns of Mary, Elizabeth, and James — for, *the*

*spirit* of the antagonists was virtually the same! I write not from *hear-say*, doubting reader; no! in 1850 *I saw and heard*, time after time, passion and feeling bear down reason and conciliation; I witnessed the pacific and amiable qualities of charitableness and brotherly-kindness banished from London platforms and pulpits! and, believe it or not, the very men, who in 1850 exhibited such palpable proofs of their own lack of *temperance* and *forbearance*, are now holding up Shakespeare to their congregations, as an immoral, licentious, irreligious, dangerous writer —

Shame burn their cheeks to cinder! YOUNG.

Some of my readers — some of those who are not yet readers of Shakespeare, may, probably, be ready to accuse me of *enthusiasm*, and fancy I am permitting my *imagination* to run away with my *judgement*; but, keep in remembrance my junior readers, that I am on what is called “the wrong side of 50,” and that I may, after nearly 40 years reading of Shakespeare and his critics, fairly be allowed to express my sentiments *frankly* and *boldly* — not *dogmatically* and *offensively*.

The *good* effected by the dissemination of the tens of thousands of copies of Shakespeare’s works, is incalculable! I am persuaded that his charitable and benign principles and precepts have operated very powerfully in aiding the more authoritative and holier teachings of the Founder of Christianity; that notwithstanding Shakespeare’s lessons may have passed unheeded by our theological Instructors and political Rulers, they have had a most beneficial influence on the multitudes who have heard and read them: not to our Cabinet-councils, our Parliaments, our Universities, nor even to our Pulpits, but, to the civilizing and humanizing dramas of Shakespeare, partially heard and read throughout the length and breadth of the land, are we to attribute the diffusion of knowledge, and that *change* in public-opinion which has gradually brought about those alterations in our penal-laws, from revenge and vengeance to justice and mercy.

In 7 lines, Shakespeare has furnished us with an epitome of duty —

Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee;  
Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,  
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not!



Let all the ends thou aims't at, be thy country's,  
 Thy God's, and truth's; then, if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,  
 Thou fall'st a blessed martyr. *Henry VIII.*

—and in 4 lines, he has pointed out the danger attendant upon neglect of duty —

Omission to do what is necessary,  
 Seals a commission to a blank of danger;  
 And danger, like an ague, subtly taints  
 Even then when we sit idly in the sun.

As to his recommending “an observance of the laws of Man, rather than the laws of God,” the very reverse is the case. Accept of one proof from among many —

*Murderer.* He that hath commanded, is our King.

*Clarence.* Erroneous vassal! the great King of kings

Hath, in the table of his Law, commanded —

That thou shalt do no murder: Will you, then,

Spurn at His edict, and fulfil a Man's?

*Take heed*; for He holds vengeance in his hand,

To hurl upon their heads that break his law!

*Richard III.*

Again and again, he has persuasively urged his fellow men to place an unlimited reliance on the *goodness* as well as *wisdom* of Omnipotence; assuring them —

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,

Rough-hew them as we will:

moreover, impressing upon us —

The *means* that Heaven yields must be embraced,

And not neglected; else, if Heaven *would*,

And we *will not*, Heaven's offer we refuse.

—he also tells us, for our encouragement,

Wisdom and Fortune combating together,

If that the former *dare* but what it *can*,

No chance may\* shake it: [\**may* in the sense of *can*

and, should we fail in any laudable enterprise, his advice is —

Cease to lament for that thou canst not help,

And study help for that which thou lament'st;

Time is the nurse and breeder of all good:

further inculcating, in a variety of ways,

Men must endure

Their going hence, even as their coming hither;

*Ripeness is all!*

In short, Shakespeare *knew* more of human-nature, and has *communicated* more of the excellence and frailty of

humanity, than any other writer on record. He has stamped upon the minds of all his attentive readers —

There is *no darkness*, but — Ignorance;  
which he emphatically designates,

*The curse of God;*

Knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to Heaven!  
and yet, there are men, professed Instructors of their fellow men, Lecturers on morality, Doctors of divinity, who know not the writings of our greatest Moral-philosopher! who know not that Shakespeare is the man!

I cannot call this Shakespeare a "Sceptic," as some do; his *indifference to the creeds* and theological quarrels of his time misleading them. No: neither "Unpatriotic," though he says little about his *patriotism*; nor Sceptic, though he says little about his *faith*. Such "indifference" was the fruit of his greatness withall: his whole heart was in his own grand sphere of worship — we may call it such; these other controversies, vitally important to other men, were not vital to Him.

CARLYLE. *The Hero as Poet*. 1841.

Nearly 40 years ago, in my course of reading the 45 volumes of the British Essayists (enough to frighten a young *Go-a-head* of 1854) I was struck with the following lines on Shakespeare —

This admirable writer, as well as the best and greatest men of all ages and of all nations, seems to have had his mind *thoroughly seasoned with religion*; as it is evident by many passages in his Plays, that would not be suffered by a modern audience.

*The Tatler*. 24 December, 1709.

and this observation, coming from an authority I had learned to respect, was instrumental in removing the scales of Prejudice from my eyes. I began to read Shakespeare in good earnest; and found that he was not merely well-read in the Scriptures, but, that the lessons he taught and the principles he inculcated, were more in harmony with the precepts of Christianity, than were the doctrines promulgated from the generality of pulpits — and a more intimate acquaintance with his writings, has tended to make me think higher and more highly of him.

Should any reader of this essay, doggedly refuse to read Shakespeare, let such reader procure Rankin's elaborate

little volume (published in 1841, at Whittaker's) entitled, *The Philosophy of Shakespeare*; wherein may be found a rich collection of extracts, exemplifying our great Moral-philosopher's *philosophic turn of mind*, on a variety of topics: and then, let such reader continue to refuse, to resist reading Shakespeare — if he can!

I instance Rankin's little work, because it is, at once, little, low-priced, and to the purpose. There are other works of a like tendency, which, with more pretensions, are less worthy of *my* recommendation.

Observe, *I do not recommend* Shakespeare to be read in detached sentences, on particular points, by piecemeal; no such thing! for his flowers are not tied up in handsome nosegays nor hung up in graceful garlands; neither are his fruits gathered into elegant baskets, in his works; they are spread over immense tracts, and spring up in spots where least expected: but, let those who are afraid [*affraid*] of entering his vast domain, "in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and to roses, filling the eye with awful [not *anful*] pomp, and gratifying the mind with endless diversity;" let such readers as fear to behold Nature in its exuberance and nakedness, enjoy some of its sweets in conservatories and balconies — and let those who dare not, or will not, read Shakespeare in the grandeur and homeliness of his works, learn *something* of his unparalleled excellence, in culled passages and extracted beauties; for, as he himself informs us —

No profit grows, where is no pleasure ta'en.

Those who are the best read in Shakespeare, are likely to experience the greatest difficulty in making *Selections* from his writings; for, if they would select *Characters*, they know them to be as numerous and diversified as those they encounter in the busy world; if they would select *Styles*, they know he has exhausted all styles, and appropriated one for each description of poetry, as well as of action; if they would select specimens of wit, humor, satire, pathos, or aught else, where shall they begin? where end? the choice is too abundant. When a volume of *The beauties of Shakespeare* was shown to Sheridan, he very gravely inquired — And where are the eleven other volumes?" This anecdote reminds me of a pithy sentence I copied from the writings of Rev. Martin Sherlock —

There never was a Poet who had such sublime beauties, so great a variety of beauties, or so great a number of beauties, as Shakespeare.

Perhaps, patient reader, I cannot close this Chapter better, than by quoting a passage from *Henry V*, as it is so applicable to Shakespeare himself —

Hear him but reason in divinity,  
And, all-admiring, with an inward wish  
You would desire the King were made a Prelate:  
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,  
You would say, it hath been all-in-all his study:  
List his discourse of War, and you shall hear  
A fearful battle rendered you in music:  
Turn him to any cause of Policy,  
The Gordian-knot of it he will unloose,  
Familiar as his garter; that when he speaks,  
The air, a chartered libertine, is still;  
And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,  
To steal his sweet and honeyed sentences!

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## CHAPTER VII.

*Shakespeare's Language in general.*  
*Use and Abuse of Words.*  
*Delicacy of Expression.*

He was not of an Age, but, for all time! BEN. JONSON.

In 1768, the "Colossus of English literature" informed his countrymen, that Shakespeare "is more agreeable to the ears of the present age, than any other author equally remote; and, among his other excellences [*excellences*] deserves to be *studied* as one of the original masters of our language.

JOHNSON'S *Preface to Shakespeare*:

The like has been told us 100 times since; yet, there are but few, who, on this account, make Shakespeare their *study*. Englishmen (like the natives of other lands) do not make their *own* language a study; though many, among the "*liberally* educated," too often spend years in acquiring a knowledge (sometimes a mere smattering) of other languages. Our forefathers had an adage, which the present generation seems to have thrown to the dogs —

Leave all other tongues alone,

"Till ye can *read, write, speak* your own;  
 and one of the results of neglecting this advice, may be seen in the discreditably expressed communications from persons of rank and fortune, in the columns of our Newspapers — may be heard from our Platforms, and from the Chairs at public meetings. Without casting a stone at a giant, a scholar indeed, I may safely aver — *He who is not Master of his own language*, though a proficient in many others, *is but an ill-educated man*.

Johnson has very prettily said — "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison;" and I would say — Whoever is ashamed of his mother-tongue, let him open the volumes of Shakespeare, and blush at his own want of taste. Whoever is browbeaten by Scholars or Critics, for not being versed in the writings of the ancients, let him produce the mine of Shakespeare's treasures, and

boldly challenge its equal among all the writers of antiquity. Whoever is accused of his ignorance of Foreign literature, let him be but qualified to evince his thorough acquaintance with Shakespeare's knowledge and language, and he may indignantly return the scorn and contempt. *Science of Pronunciation.* 1850.

Emerson, one of the American *New-Lights* — whom I am bold to nominate a *Literary Comet* — that is, a transient meteor in the horizon of the literary world, whose short-lived [not *lived* in the singular] blaze is already on the decline — Emerson has penned and published, in his too highly lauded *Representative Men* —

Shakespeare's principal merit may be conveyed in saying, that He of all men best understands the English language and can say what he will.

Preposterous and false! I readily admit Shakespeare's *mastery* over our language; I unhesitatingly acknowledge that he could do what he pleased with it: yet, *I deny* that this excellence constituted his "principal merit;" I embrace every fitting opportunity of recommending others to *study* Shakespeare, as being the greatest Master of our tongue, as having no rival — for, whatever he wished to express, he expressed; if the language did not furnish him with a Word suited to his thought, he made it; he not only *fidiused* Aufidius, *outheroded* Herod, and *incarnadined* the multitudinous seas, but he fearlessly *struck flat the thick rotundity o'the world, cracked Nature's mould*, and made his hearer's *hairs to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine*; the hardest and most stubborn words were as dough in his hands, which he dexterously kneaded to suit his immediate need, even to the *splitting of the unwedgeable and gnarled oak*, as a fitting contrast to *the soft myrtle*; and the words of his *creation*, beat into form on the anvil of his necessity, bid fair to last as long as our language shall endure: still, I cannot, and will not admit, that his mastery over his Language *equals*, much less surpasses in merit, his mastery over the Human heart — great as he was as an *adapter* and *coiner of words*, as a rhetorician, he was immeasurably greater as a Poet, a Dramatist, a Moral-philosopher, and a Philanthropist.

Tell me not, my dissatisfied reader, that Emerson has written several finer passages on Shakespeare, than the one I have quoted; that may be; but, all such passages, though

they may be finer, more worthy of Shakespeare, in your estimation or in mine, are, confessedly, of less importance in the judgement of Emerson himself — or, I cannot understand the simplest expressions in our language. . . “Principal merit” I translate *chief merit, highest merit, greatest merit*; and, of course, all other merits are and must be subordinate — *lesser merits*.

Are you, gentle reader, prepared to receive the ‘Truth’? If so, I would tell you, in plain English, that this said Emerson, like other *over-great* men of our day, has been preposterously *over-rated*; and that what he has written of Shakespeare, is so incongruous and extravagant, as to render his opinions — simply *absurd*.

In his Essay on History, the bepraised American New-Light writes —

When the Gods come among men, they are not known. Jesus was not; Socrates and Shakespeare were not!

yet, Emerson afterwards writes of this same *god Shakespeare*, his “principal merit” consists in his mastery of the English language! and (would it were not so) such incoherent effusions have gone the round of our Periodicals, have been reprinted in the columns of our Newspapers; and we English have been called upon by the London-press, to fall down and worship this newly revealed *god Emerson*, and to admire all the heterogeneities which flow from his momentarily idolized pen!

Ye gods! it doth amaze me,  
A man of such a feeble temper, should  
So get the start of this majestic world,  
And bear the palm alone!

*Julius Cesar.*

I blush to think that our Reviewers should have made so Much ado about Nothing — a comparative Nothing; for, I have read Emerson, and I scruple not to aver, that He is neither that *original thinker* nor that *profound thinker*, our Critics have represented him: much of his dubious fame, is attributable to his having expressed his incongruous notions, of men and things, in *not quite half-intelligible language*, and that language designedly contrary to the best usage of our age — an irrefragable proof of his bad taste; an insult to common sense.

It strikes me, that Emerson’s intentionally *bad-english*, together with his *obscurity of phraseology* and *strangeness*

of conception, must have taken our Critics by surprise and overwhelmed them — fairly confounded them by his Americanisms and wantonness of thought, expression, and words. In his Essay on Circles, he writes —

Beware when the Great God *lets loose a Thinker* on this planet!

and our Critics, fancying (I suppose) that Emerson must necessarily be a prodigious *Thinker*, have, in their confused imaginings, magnified his simple unintelligibilities into wonderfully original sublimities! It may safely be urged against our bepraisers of Emerson, that (as Sir Nathaniel has it) they had not fed much of the dainties that are bred in books; that they had “not eat paper, as it were;” that they had “not drunk ink” sufficient: or, they certainly would have discovered, that after deducting what Emerson had copied from Montaigne, Shakespeare, Swedenborg, Channing, and Carlyle (not to mention the British Essayists) all his boasted *originality* may be very comfortably put into a nutshell; while his peculiarities of expression and extravagant use of words, instead of eliciting praise, ought to have received censure — as men of good understanding not only write so as to be clearly and readily apprehended, but consider the best sense deserving of the best language. Bucke has remarked —

No writer (even a poet) should cease to remember, that *simplicity of expression* gives as much lustre to thought, as *simplicity of setting* gives to pearls and diamonds.

*Book of Human Character.*

I, for one, will not have Shakespeare rated so low, as making his “principal merit” consist in his mastery of his mother-tongue; no —

He who mocked at Art’s contrivance,\* [not control

The mighty master of the soul,

Shakespeare — our Shakespeare! *Miss MITFORD.*

has other and infinitely higher claims to merit! witness his inculcation of grand moral principles, his diffusion of mental light, his dissemination of humanizing sentiments, his promulgation of peace upon earth and good-will among men! Had Shakespeare’s *language* been his “principal merit,” his writings would now have been mouldering among those of his literary cotemporaries; instead of which, his Fame, like an Alpine avalanche, continues increasing and increasing, as the wonderful revelations of his overwhelming Genius roll down the steep of time!



Perhaps, Shakespeare has suffered more injury from his injudicious friends, than from his avowed enemies. Voltaire, whose outrageous critiques have roused the indignation of many Englishmen, bore more honorable testimony to the *genius* of the Father of the English Drama, than can be found in some of the volumes of our professed *Illustrators of Shakespeare*; and Emerson has said more to lessen the Bard of Avon in the appreciation of those who have never read his instructive Dramas, by declaring his "principal merit" to consist in his *language*, than all his other sayings and declarations can raise him in their estimation.

We have been cautioned against wasting our time, "in unprofitably poring over the obsolete words and antiquated phraseology of the no longer intelligible Shakespeare ;

but, let not those of my readers who are uninitiated in the language current in the Elizabethan age, be deterred from reading England's chief author, from any such silly cautions ; as the words, expressions, and phraseology of Shakespeare, surpass in simplicity, clearness, and intelligibility, not only those of all his cotemporaries, but of many of his successors — Ralph Waldo Emerson not excepted.

Occasionally, words and phrases may be obscure, doubtful, puzzling ; but, what of that ? Is not the Bible full of puzzles ? and have not the learned, age after age, broken their shins against the stumbling-blocks lying in confused heaps from Genesis to Revelations ? yet, pulpit orators tell us, that those ancient writings are *so plain*, that a way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

Shall I tell you a secret, gentle reader ? To the best of my knowledge, there is not a single Play of all the 37, that I *understand* clearly and *comprehend* fully, notwithstanding I have been a reader of Shakespeare and Commentators on Shakespeare, for so many years — yet, I read him still ; because, I *apprehend* quite sufficient, in spite of all difficulties, to render him superior to all other writers.

To those who are not accustomed to read Shakespeare, I would say — Let not a dozen strange words, nor half a dozen strange sentences, which you may chance to encounter on your first opening his works, affright you ; much less prevent you from making his language, sentiments, and principles, your study ; your time and labor will be amply rewarded : neither give credence to what some

have written concerning "the antiquated words and expressions which crowd the text of Shakespeare;" for, they are, comparatively, few. "The perplexity occasioned by the different and obsolete *accentuations* of words," which has been held up as a scarecrow, by writers who ought to have known better, is scarcely deserving of special notice; for, though Editors have not been careful in marking peculiarly accented words, still, the rhythm is sufficient, in most cases, to intimate the uncommon accentuations — of which there are but a score of examples in the long play of *Hamlet*; and whether you read còmpetent or compètent, persevère or persèver, cànzonized or canònized, sèpulchre or sepùlchre, rèvenue or revènuè, còntrary or contràry, the *meaning* of the text cannot thereby be obscured.

Sometimes, though very rarely, Shakespeare sports with the accentuations of words; as when Polonius says —

And now remains

That we find out the cause of this effect —

Or rather, say the cause of this defect;

For, this effect, defective, comes by cause:

Thus it remains, and the remainder thus. *Hamlet.*

This *playing* with the accentuations is quite in character out of the lips of the garrulous lord Chamberlain; out of Cardinal Pandolph's mouth, they flow more copiously —

The better act of purposes mistook

Is to mistake again; though indirect,

Yet, indirection thereby grows direct,

And falsehood falsehood cures. *King John.*

Such accentual sportiveness, is of but rare occurrence; consequently, ought not to have been raised as an obstacle to the apprehension of Shakespeare's text. Laziness alone magnifies such molehills into mountains.

Hitherto, we have not an Edition of our great poet, with all the obsolete, sportive, or poetically-licensed accentuations, accented in the text; even Knight has been very remiss in this particular. Now and then, we meet with a Shakespearean accentuation marked to the eye; but, *where most needed*, they have been neglected in every Edition extant! England still requires, a veritable *People's Edition* of the great Poet of the People. When shall we have it?

Knight seems to fancy that *The Stratford Shakspeare* [which I, after all the pages of learned nonsense in favor of other Spellings, continue to write *Shakespeare*] is a *People's*

*Edition*; but, it is not so: and now, I have not any expectation of Knight's ever furnishing us with a *People's Edition*; my hope on that point, is settling down into despair. If I should chance to meet with a young enterprising Bookseller, who would venture upon publishing a *People's Edition*, for *Half the price* of the *Stratford Shakespeare*, and without the flourish of an editor's *Name*, trusting the Sale solely to the merits of the edition, I might, perhaps, *make time* to furnish the Copy — similar to the manner in which I present quotations in this essay — with *hints* at the ends of the lines, instead of *foot-notes* and *critical observations*.

Much has been written, as well as said, on the "improper" and "indelicate," and "obscene," and "indecent," and "abominable words," which "disfigure," and "stain," and "blot," and "scandalize," and "damn the writings of Shakespeare;" whose works are said to be "altogether inadmissible into the Bookcase of a well-regulated family." I shall not stop to inquire, If the Bible be admitted into such "well regulated families" — such a question might be thought invidious, and, perhaps, provoke opposition instead of promoting conciliation: I prefer leaving the Scriptures in quiet possession of that *sacredness* in which they are held by the good and the wise of this professedly Christian country; nor would I, if I could, lessen them an iota in any one's appreciation; I, therefore waive [not *wave*] all comparison between the words and expressions contained in the Bible, and those contained in Shakespeare — Shakespeare can stand on his own merits, without my screening his words and expressions behind the authority of the Bible, or any other publication whatever, ancient or modern.

Such of my readers as open the works of Shakespeare — *as I did* — with a perverted judgement, may soon find much to pity, censure, and condemn —

All seems infected, which the infected spy;

As all seems yellow to the jaundiced eye. POPE.

To pass a just judgement on Shakespeare, he must be tried by the prevalent Laws of Society in the 16th century — not by our standard in 1854; for, to our tribunal, the Father of the English Drama *was not, is not, cannot be made* amenable; he must be tried by his peers; and his Cotemporaries being constituted his judges, when tried, Shakespeare will come forth as gold!

I can assure my timorous and doubtful readers, that if I had any cause to believe the grave charges which have been brought against Shakespeare, on the score of *obscenity*, *licentiousness*, *immorality*, and the like, I should decline being his advocate: I am not an extenuator of immoral writings, nor a palliator of even fashionable indecency; it is because Shakespeare's *chasteness* (not mastery) of language, constitutes one of his many merits, that I consider him to have been (comparatively) a Model of Purity to the age in which he lived.

In the first volume of Coleridge's *Notes and Lectures* upon Shakespeare, he bursts out with that significant exclamation —

O, the instinctive propriety of Shakespeare, in the choice of his words!

and, surely, such an exclamation from such a Critic, ought to "o'erweigh a whole theatre of others" who have made diametrically opposite exclamations.

Every reader who is acquainted with the loose, licentious, wanton phraseology of the Elizabethan age, knows that Shakespeare is an honorable and striking example of *purity*; he resolutely forbore copying the everyday *obscene expressions* of Females of rank, and the *indecent phraseology* common among the attendants at the "Virgin Queen's" court — this was one of his negative merits: but, he had also the positive merit of reproving them for their *lack of delicacy*, and their *infringements on decorum*! he was not satisfied with inculcating a higher tone of Morals merely, he extended his authority to the refinement of Taste and the purification of Language. Though a Dramatist by profession, he considered it beneath his dignity as a Moral-philosopher, whose duty called him to *instruct* and *elevate* his auditors, to use such *revolting* and *filthy* words and expressions on his Stage, as were then uttered from the Pulpits. Some of my readers may be aware, others not, that the very *Titles of Sermons*, printed and published in Shakespeare's day, would shock the least squeamish in these "better times," had I the hardihood to reprint them herein! and the Letters of the Ladies of the then "refined court of Elizabeth" (Letters still extant) contain words, expressions, and sentiments, which for coarseness, indelicacy, and wantonness, have no parallels in Shakespeare — not even in his most indecorous and most abandoned characters!

Now, gentle reader, if these things be true, what think you of Shakespeare? has he not been shamefully misrepresented?

No grave reproach can, at any time, have weighed upon a man whose cotemporaries never speak of him without affection and esteem.

GUIZOT, *on Shakespeare and his Times*. 1852.

But, my readers must not infer, that the Doctors of Divinity and Court Ladies were *morally impure* and *criminally immodest*, because they made use of words and expressions which would damn the character of a Bishop or a Duchess in our day; no such thing! such an inference would not be merely uncharitable, but it would prove an absence of that discrimination between cultivated and uncultivated societies, between coarse and refined morals, which should ever accompany investigations into Character. It was customary, 250 years ago, to call men and things by their *own* names; both Ladies of rank and Dignitaries of the church, called a Spade a *spade*, a Rogue a *rogue*, a Stallion a *stallion*, and so on; whereas, in our day, we should be ashamed, if not affraid, of calling either men or things by their *right names*—

When you know that you have been *cheated* at Play, by a *Blackleg*, you speak of having been *beat* by a very *gentlemanlike* man; when you have been *robbed* by a designing Merchant, you speak of having *lost* considerably by a mercantile transaction with a *gentleman* in the city; when you have been *basely deceived* by a reputed friend, you acknowledge *the gentlemanly manner* in which he injured you—nay, even in our two Houses of Parliament, the Members of which enjoy what is termed “full and free liberty of speech,” and all of them are protected from resentment—even there, we do not hear them calling each other by their right names; they are exceedingly guarded in their words and expressions: very few of them possess moral courage enough to call Evil *evil*, Injustice *injustice*, Oppression *oppression*, and the like; the *Desolation of Countries*, they designate “Taking lands under our Protection;” *Sending volleys of grapeshot and canister among congregated masses of helpless, unoffending, injured Chinese*, they term “Spreading the Gospel;” *Butchering 30,000 Sikhs*, they denominate

“Converting the Heathens to Christianity;” Aggression they call *defense*, Plundering *luxuriating*, Monsters *heroes*, and so on —

*Science of Pronunciation* (25 Paternoster Row) 1850.

— and the writer might have added, in the words of the lord Chamberlain :

We are oft to blame in this !

’Tis too much proved, that, with devotion’s visage,  
And pious action, *we do sugar o’er*

*The Devil himself.* *Hamlet.*

On this species of the *abuse of words*, I shall add another extract, as it is one of the weaknesses of this age —

One of the most powerful instruments of vice, the most fatal of all its poisoned weapons, is the abuse of words, by which good and bad feeling are *blended* together, and its deformity concealed, from an apparent alliance to some proximate virtue. Prodigality and dissipation, are *liberality* and *high spirit*; covetousness *frugality*; flattery *good-breeding*. As society advances in civilisation, the power of this engine does not diminish. To give harsh deeds *soft names*, is one of the evils of refinement. In preventing this confusion (in preventing this abuse of words) in sustaining a high tone of moral feeling, by giving *harsh names* to harsh deeds, the preservation of the boundaries between virtue and vice mainly depends.

MONTAGU’S *Thoughts, &c.*

I have now to relate an anecdote (not yet published for the thousandth time) which may, perhaps, set me right with some of my readers. Last night (2nd March 1854) I read the preceding Chapter (which I penned yesterday) to 3 Ladies — the nearest and dearest friends upon earth — that I might have their *sincere* opinions upon it. They thought well of it; they thought I had vindicated Shakespeare, “to all intents and purposes,” from the Charges preferred against him; but, they one and all, condemned *the harsh names* I had used in connection with his Aspersers; they begged me to expunge all such words as *carping critics* and *canting moralists*; because, as they maintained, such epithets, “not being gentlemanly,” might convey an unfavorable impression of myself — but, they were not aware that this essay is to be published *anonymously*; nor did they perceive the necessity of some one’s calling Shake-

speare's defamers by their *right names*. There is such a thing as *moral justice*; a necessity for uttering Truth in a bold, unsophisticated, naked, harsh form; and though "ungentlemanly," it does not follow that it is *unmanly*. When, for instance, Bell asserts — Whoever has looked into the *original* editions of his dramas, will be disgusted with the obscenity of his allusions — they absolutely *teem* with the grossest improprieties — more gross *by far* than can be found in *any cotemporary* dramatist —

it would be *improper*, it would be a dereliction of *duty* to the public, were I to pass over such an aspersion, with the "gentlemanly" phrase — *Bell was mistaken, Bell was in error*; I am bound, in duty to my readers, to strike the boundary line between *a mistake* and *a lie* — that is, *a false statement* made with the intent *to deceive*. There is, sometimes, *a moral necessity* of telling the Truth bluntly; and, as I fear neither man nor devil, I oppose a blunt Truth against a shameless Lie. "Chew upon this."

In judging of Character, we ought invariably to take into account, the *Morality of the Age* in which the party lived; or, we shall, assuredly, judge amiss: for, though Morality, *as a principle*, is immutable, the Morals of nations and parties are subject to *change*. Many things which were strictly *moral* in the Patriarchal ages, became, through the increase of population, *immoral* in the age of Moses; and much of the advanced *morality* of Moses, and the still more refined *morality* of the Prophets in after ages, was repudiated, as *immoral*, by the Founder of Christianity: even so, many things which were accounted *moral* by the earlier inhabitants of this island, became *immoral* as our forefathers receded from barbarism; and much of the *morality* of the Elizabethan age, has, by progress in intellectual culture and refinement of taste, become *immoral*, and is repudiated as *immoral*, by the still less barbarous cotemporaries of Victoria.

Ravenscroft, the *filthiest* writer for the Stage in the reign of the second Charles, is not more obscene than Beaumont and Fletcher; yet, Earle, who was a pillar of the church (a Bishop withall) praises their Plays for their *purity*; and Lovelace likens the nakedness of their language to Cupid dressed in Diana's linnen [not *linen*] and it must be admitted, that the outspoken style of their writings is in the very character of their age and of the age immediately suc-

ceeding; for Charles I. was in the habit of addressing the Ladies of his court in a style which would not meet with toleration now. Propriety (I mean *delicacy*) of speech and conduct, one does not look for at the Restoration —

“All was license\* then: [\*noun *licence*, verb

Love was *liberty*, and Nature *law*.” [*license*

Plays were beheld by Ladies in masks, who “blushed unseen” at *situations, language, and allusions* of “the most bare-faced and obscene” description. Something of this unblushing nakedness continued to later times. Ramsay dedicated his *Tea Table Miscellany* to the Ladies and Lassies of Britain, boasting that his book was without a word or an allusion to redden the brow of offended Beauty; yet, that very book, incredulous reader, abounds in naked vulgarities and songs of studied obscenity. The novels of the once “immaculate Richardson,” which Ladies talked and quoted into *deserved* celebrity, but very few Ladies of 1854 would acknowledge to having ever read; and, perhaps, there is not now a Clergyman in all London who would dare (as formerly) to recommend Richardson’s novels from the pulpit. The Letters of the Maids of Honor about the courts of the first and second Georges — the Howes and Bellendens and Lepells — are rife with the very dregs and filth of our language: the *cleanest* are reported (by Thomas Campbell) to be in the *Suffolk Papers*; but, even in them, a Spade is called a *spade*, and so on —

“Themselves they studied; as they felt they writ!”

and, I must not omit stating, that such “Purifiers of our language,” as Dryden and Pope are allowed to have been, scrupled not to publish expressions of which the purer-minded Shakespeare, in his still less refined age, would not have deigned to use!

Now, modest reader, though there are words and expressions in Shakespeare’s writings, which I should not choose to read in public, nor yet to a fireside assembly, Shakespeare was not only *pure-minded* himself, but, incontrovertibly, one of the greatest *purifiers* both of our language and manners. There are passages in the grand epic of Milton, which, to me, are revolting; yet, there is not anything *impure* in *Paradise Lost*. There are many passages in the Bible, which I would not be hired to read (as directed in the Book of Common-prayer) “with a loud voice,” to a public, nor yet to a private *mixed* auditory — and it would



be a forsaking of *my duty* (as a writer to the public) were I now to refrain from giving it as my deliberate and confirmed opinion, that — those who can permit their Wives, Sisters, and Daughters, to listen to the Biblical Lessons appointed to be read in our Churches and Chapels, in the presence of a *mixed* concourse of spectators, may, very safely, trust them with the Dramas of Shakespeare in the closet. Be not, my readers, be not *strainers out of Gnats and swallowers of Camels*.

No one knew better than Shakespeare, the *use* and *abuse* of words; no one has given us such proofs of his knowledge and discrimination of words; nor has any one taken so much pains, or embraced so many opportunities of *correcting* and *reproving* those who made *ill use* of words — whether erring intentionally or inadvertently. When Portia's maid, Nerissa, makes use of a certain expression — an expression perfectly innocent in itself, but which, accidentally, was so worded as to admit of a double [doubble] interpretation, the pure-minded Portia instantly exclaims,

Fy! what a question's that,

If thou wert near a lewd interpreter —

thus putting Nerissa on her guard against using ambiguous words and phrases, lest they should be disadvantageously construed by *searchers after impurities*. And, believe me, many of the so-called impurities in Shakespeare, never would have been discovered, had not the Discoverers brought *impure imaginations* along with them; for, as the great moralist himself informs us, through the lips of "the purest and most graceful of beings," Viola —

They that dally nicely with words, may quickly  
*make them wanton!* *Twelfth Night.*

— and we have it, on still more revered authority, that,  
"To the Pure, all things are *pure*."

In 4 Scene of 4 Act of 2nd Part of Henry IV, on the King's lamenting the graceless conduct of the Prince of Wales, who was the pot-companion of low-lived fellows, Warwick addresses his majesty as follows —

My gracious Lord, you look beyond him quite:  
The Prince *but studies* his Companions,  
Like a strange tongue; wherein, to gain the language,  
"Tis *needful* that *the most immodest word*  
Be looked upon and learned; which, once attained,  
Your highness knows, comes to no further use,  
But to be *known* and *hated*.

— whence, Shakespeare teaches us, that *diversity* in Moral feeling, depends on something more, something beyond our use of *coarse* or *delicate*, *vulgar* or *refined*, *modest* or *immodest*, words.

*Grossness* (meaning *coarseness*) and *Vulgarity* (in the sense of *unfashionableness*) are not the same; the one is native, the other foreign; we have grossness by *birth*, vulgarity by *acquirement*; our high-bred gentry are never *gross*, yet, they are too frequently *vulgar*. Caliban (one of our Dramatist's masterpieces) is the very essence of *grossness*, without a particle of *vulgarity*; he is "of the earth, earthy;" but, Iago (another masterpiece) is both *gross* and *vulgar* — This, however, is a knotty point, and I must have recourse to example.

In Emilia's use of the word *whore*, there is grossness without vulgarity; but, had Desdemona repeated the word, vulgarity would have been added to grossness: instead of which, with a Shakesperean [not *Shakesperian*] turn of phraseology, the sensitive Dramatist has given us one of his specimens of *delicacy* —

*Iago* (to Desdemona)      What's the matter, Lady?

*Emilia* (the Wife of the indecorous soldier, takes up the word, and says, in her coarse manner)

Alas, Iago, my lord\* hath so bewhored her,      [\*Othello  
Thrown such despite and heavy terms upon her,  
That true hearts cannot hear it!

*Desdemona*. Am I that name, Iago?

*Iago*.      What name, fair Lady?

*Desdemona*. Such as *she said* my Lord *did say* I was.

— there's a masterstroke of delicacy, for you, prejudiced reader against Shakespeare! When Iago put the question so pointedly, *What* name, fair Lady? the brute expected to have heard the low-lived term again; but, though the Secretary of Nature made no scruple of issuing the offensive word out of Emilia's mouth, he would not gratify Iago by letting the revolting term pass the lips of the delicately minded Desdemona; the delicate Shakespeare disappointed the fulsome expectation of the rude and libidinous soldier, by a very natural, simple, modest expression — Such as *she said* my Lord *did say* I was.

I trust this example may have sufficiently elucidated my meaning; and that my readers may have perceived, that *vulgarity* is not *natural grossness*, but *conventional grossness*;

not inborn, but, learned from others; consequently, what may be vulgar in one person, or one age, may be free from vulgarity in another: what may be *vulgar* as well as *immoral* in our day, may have been free from any such charge in the time of our great Moral-philosopher and Master-dramatist.

The word *cuckold*, is, in 1854, still heard among what are denominated our *highly respectable classes*; yet, the great Purifier of our modes of expression attempted to extirpate the word from the fashionable circles of his day; for, when Gratiano uses the word, though in private, Portia instantly rebukes him for his indelicacy — *Speak not so grossly!* In truth, it is to Shakespeare's lessons on *delicacy*, that we, as a people, are indebted for the abatement of that grossness and indelicacy so common with our forefathers — and still so common on the Continent of Europe.

Had any other dramatist introduced the historical account given by Sir Thomas of Walsingham (p. 557) or, from Holingshed (p. 528) what a scene of grossness and repulsiveness we should have had! yet, the refined Shakespeare avoided both —

Upon whose dead corpse there was such misuse,  
Such beastly, shameless transformation,

By those Welchwomen\* done, as may not be, [\*not  
*Without much shame*, re-told or spoken of! [*Welsh*

Shakespeare refers to it, without telling it; his *delicacy* forbade his depicting the shameless scene — and *certain other scenes*, common in his day, and which he thus openly censured, though committed by Order of the "Virgin Queen!" scenes perpetrated in the streets of London, "in despite of brooded watchful day," by the command of Elizabeth, were not permitted to stain his page — no, not even by a remote allusion.

Shakespeare was neither gross nor vulgar, notwithstanding he, occasionally, as the Depicter of men and manners, exhibited vulgarity and grossness in his Characters — just as Aristophanes and Horace, two noted *models of urbanity*, occasionally displayed what the cotemporaries of Victoria would call, *the coarsest indelicacy and shameless immodesty*.

In Measure for Measure there are scenes, which, to a casual reader, may be insufferably gross and revolting; but, to those who penetrate beneath the surface, those who are capable of diving into the philosophically moral aim of

the dramatist, these very exhibitions of offensiveness, will be discovered *necessary* to the carrying out of his deep lessons of political philosophy.

Several well-meaning attempts have been made, to *apologize* for the insertion of such gross scenes; but, Shakespeare does not stand in need of *apologies*; and they who seek for *excuses* of what the incomparable and far-sighted artist has written, would be better employed in seeking out *his object* in writing what appears to them to require excuse: He was not a bungler, nor a random writer; every scene is indispensable, however gross or trifling or excrescent it may appear, at first sight; nor could it be remitted or withdrawn, without injury, without destroying the *completeness* of the drama. Coleridge (whom Leigh Hunt styles "the finest dreamer, the most eloquent talker, and the most original thinker of his day") felt what I maintain, when he wrote —

In all points from the most important to the most minute, the *judgement* of Shakespeare is commensurate with his *genius* — nay, that his genius reveals itself in his judgement, as in its most exalted form.

*Notes and Lectures.*

Although two centuries and a half have rolled over the heads of Shakespeare's successors, how few, how very few, seem to have any adequately just conceptions concerning him! Strange as it may appear to some of my readers, I am of opinion that Shakespeare was better understood and more justly appreciated in his own, than in any succeeding age; for, notwithstanding there were fewer readers, there were more gigantic minds, than have ever existed *at one period* since. It is nothing short of an insult to common-sense, for any one to mention the pseudo Augustan-age of England in the same breath as the Shakesperean-age; it is a tacit, but a convincing proof, that such persons are not well-read in the mightiest-age of our literature! England had then a constellation of great minds, before whom "the elegant writers" of Queen Anne's-age, must hide their diminished heads! There was the myriad-minded Shakespeare, the thousand-souled Bacon, the — but, halt! this is not the place for such an enumeration; I am entering on a topic which would occupy Chapters, and all I can spare it, is Lines. That effulgent constellation was speedily overcast with clouds of prejudice, fanaticism, and pusillan-

imity; and though occasional glimmerings of light have been seen in every subsequent period, it was not until the 19th century that the winds of mental progress began to waft away the obscurations which had so long hid the Sun of Dramatists from the gaze of his countrymen. The genius of the British Isles has long been obscured, but, his light has not waxed dim through length of years; and if we continue progressing, as a people, proportionately with the progress of the last half century, the time is not far distant when we shall behold Shakespeare in all his glory! when the impenetrable patches of obscurity and even the spots upon his disk shall be removed, by the evaporation of prejudice and the dispersion of mental darkness.

Shakespeare's editors, and commentators, and critics of the 18th century, did not, could not interpret his writings; they neither apprehended his grand designs nor discovered his ultimate aims! to them he was a brilliant, but an "irregular and wayward" Poet; a great, but an "immethodical and capricious" Dramatist — as a Moralist, a Philosopher, or a Philanthropist, he was to them almost unknown; he was not consulted for his knowledge, or revered for his wisdom, or esteemed for his goodness — but, the light which has arisen upon Shakespeare in the 19th century, can never again be extinguished! Schlegel and Coleridge and Knight, have secured to Shakespeare a more worthy appreciation of his writings, than the critiques and comments of all preceding times — and yet, even these able and admirable guides, have occasionally stooped to exculpations; to the softening down of seeming outrages, to apologizing for apparent shortcomings, &c. and this I think, is uncalled for. Much of Shakespeare has been revealed to us, in the present century; and much, perhaps, has yet to be revealed: let Patience have its perfect work; let us trust that what may be unaccountable to us, future Commentators may make plain.

I have admitted, gentle reader, that there are words and expressions in Shakespeare, which I should not choose to read before a public nor yet before a fireside auditory; what then? does it necessarily follow that the Dramatist wrote what he ought not to have written? certainly not. For instance, I should not choose to read aloud before a mixed company, the *Play scene* in Hamlet; yet, if rightly viewed,

that very scene, with all its so-called *frightful indecences*, is a striking proof of Shakespeare's moral courage, in daring to reproach Elizabeth and her Courtiers for their daily use of *indelicate* and *unbecoming* language. Reflect for a moment, *where* it is, that the great Moral-teacher makes use of those *now* [not *then*] revolting terms — it is in the Court, not on the Rampart; it is in the presence of the King, Queen, and Court-attendants, not among the Soldiers on guard, nor in the speech of the Sailors; and who is it that makes use of the now unutterable terms? and to whom? it is the Prince of Denmark, in conversation with the Lord Chamberlain's Daughter; it is Hamlet, the Observed of all Observers, addressing the fair Ophelia! and it is to the eternal honor of Shakespeare, that he issued such indecences out of the mouths of *the highest classes* — too often the lowest sunk in morals and good-breeding! It was thus that our Moral-philosopher held the mirror up to nature, showing the very age and body of the Time its form and pressure; for, Shakespeare knew, that more libidinous language was to be heard in Elizabeth's Court, than he had used in his Court of Denmark. I need not Knight's, nor yet Schlegel's exculpation of Shakespeare, for his use (not abuse) of "the horribly disgusting" terms in the scene alluded to — it was manly and noble in Shakespeare, to introduce such indelicacies and indecences before Elizabeth and her Courtiers, and it was courageous and magnanimous in him to utter them out of the lips of "the most gentlemanly of Princes."

A Reverend gentleman has argued, at considerable length (and, as he fancies, most ably and incontrovertibly) that Shakespeare *must have had a polluted mind*, from the very fact of his having used so many "vile and indecorous expressions;" and winds up his "irrefutable arguments" [*arguements*] by maintaining, that "Shakespeare's *knowledge of impurities*, proves his mind to have been impure." But, considerate reader, does not this prove rather too much? does it not prove, among other things, that the Reverend gentleman himself is *impure*? seeing that he also possesses *the knowledge* of these impurities? But; not to be too severe upon him, it certainly proves him to be a very bad Logician. The principle on which he argues, is fallacious; for, the mere understanding of what is *good* or *evil*, the mere knowledge of what is *pure* or *impure*, the mere conception of *vice* or *virtue*, can no more be an excel-

ence or a crime in the Creature than in the Creator — the apprehension of an impure expression or of an impure act, is not more *criminal* in Man or Woman, than in God himself, who knows everything in heaven above and on the earth beneath — that is, the *essence* of Guilt does not bear any reference to *knowledge*, but consists solely in the *approbation of evil* — and, what is more, the knowledge of evil, our acquaintance with the existence of impurities, is, sometimes, a *safeguard from pollution*. “Chew upon this.”

Even Pope had his fits of *squeamishness*, when editing Shakespeare's works. 'Tis true, and not less strange than true, that Pope met with scenes in Shakespeare, of which he writes — I wish I had authority to leave them out.” If an editor of 1854 were to consult the standard of taste in our day only, he might wish to leave out certain passages to be found in Shakespeare; but, by leaving such passages out, we should lose the impression of *the taste* prevalent in Shakespeare's day. And might not an editor of Pope's works wish to leave out certain passages which we look upon as *foul*, and *smutty*? though the wits and fine ladies of Queen Anne's court considered them as being merely *sportive* and *piquant*? And are not Shakespeare's offensive passages comparatively *refined*, when placed alongside of the *filthy* and *shameless* passages in the classical works of Pope's “esteemed friend,” the Reverend Dean of St. Patrick's? If Pope lived, as he averred, in a more cultivated age than Shakespeare, his offensive passages are so much the more censurable. Besides, Shakespeare's language shows us the *reform* he aimed at, in the conduct of the Stage — but, what was *the aim* of Pope or Swift?

Shakespeare was not a Reverend, nor a Pulpit-orator; but, that he was an able Theologian, and a Moral-philosopher, he has given many irrefragable proofs; and, rely upon it, doubtful reader, the more he is read and studied, the more he will be admired and loved; and his precepts and sentiments, in spite of the mutations of language, will resound throughout the universe,

From day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded Time!

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## CHAPTER VIII.

*Shakespeare's Characters are our Mirrors.*

*Witches — Augury — Omens — Miracles — Ghosts.*

“Man, *Know Thyself!* all wisdom centres there” —

but, gentle reader, how *can* we know ourselves, if we know not our faults and our excellences, our vices and our virtues? and *how* shall we discover these? By beholding ourselves in the *mirrors* of other persons; by seeing in the characters of others, the characteristics of our own minds: and when we shall perceive the intrinsic value of our excellences and our virtues, we shall be half-converted from our follies and our vices.

*Cassius.* Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your Face?

*Brutus.* No, Cassius; for, the eye sees not itself

*But by reflection* from some other thing.

*Cassius.*

'Tis just;

And it is very much lamented, Brutus,

That you have no such *mirror* as will turn

Your hidden worthiness into your eye,

That you might see your shadow. I have heard

Where many of the best respect in Rome —

Except immortal Cæsar,\* speaking of Brutus [not Cæsar

And groaning underneath this age's yoke,

Have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes.

*Brutus.* Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,

That you would have me seek into myself

For *that* which is *not in me*?

*Cassius.* Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear:

And since you know, you cannot see yourself

So well as by *reflection*, I, *your glass*,

Will modestly discover to yourself,

*That of yourself* which you yet know not of —

and in the Characters portrayed [not *pourtray*] by Shakespeare, better than in those of any other dramatist, we may behold, as in a mirror, our own vices and virtues; for, the scientific Dissector of Humanity has laid bare the human heart, with the most searching anatomy; disclosing, with masterly precision, both the intellectual and moral *strength* and *weakness* of human nature.



Shakespeare, delineating the soul, causes to pass before us always the picture of ourselves, or, a resemblance to that which we know is still living, and speaking, and doing among us, virtuously or viciously, the deeds of glory or of shame.

*Eclectic Review.* October, 1853.

But, gentle reader, it is *not* on the Stage, that you can see and examine the Characters in Shakespeare's dramas; if you wish to read that most important of volumes to man — the volume of himself — you must take Shakespeare into your closet, and shut the door; it is in your study, in retirement, that you must commune with his master mind. Charles Lamb had felt the overwhelming influence of Shakespeare's mighty genius, before he wrote —

The Lear of Shakespeare *cannot* be acted! The contemptible machinery with which they mimic the Storm, is not more inadequate to represent the real elements, than any Actor *can* be to represent Lear. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal but intellectual dimensions; the explosions of his passions, are terrible as a volcano; they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom, that rich sea, his *mind*, with all its vast riches — it is Lear's mind which is laid bare. On the Stage, we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we *read* it, we see not Lear, *we are Lear*; we are in his mind; we are sustained by a grandeur, which baffles the malice of daughters and storms. What have *looks* or *tones* to do with that sublime identification of his Age with that of the Heavens themselves, when, in his reproaches to them, for conniving at the *injustice* of his Children, he reminds them that *they* themselves are Old! What *gesture* shall we appropriate to this? What has the *voice* or the *eye* to do with such things?

Believe me, my uninitiated readers, those of you who wish to commune with Shakespeare in the mightiness of his power, must grant him a private audience.

If "to *Invent* in accordance with Nature," be an accurate definition of *genius*, Shakespeare's superiority in this quality *must* be admitted; as He possessed it in a higher degree than any other writer among men. At the dash of his

pen, Characters start into life and identity, setting up *glasses* wherein we may see the inmost parts of us. Johnson says —

*Genius* is only the power of using to any certain purpose, the materials which diligence procures; but, this does not meet my conception of *genius*: he omits, in this definition, the great attribute of what I have ever been taught to consider *genius* — the *inventive* faculty. Johnson was not a *genius*, but, a man of great attainments. I was surprised at meeting, in a more recent and unquestionably great authority, a similar declaration in favor of *appropriation* —

The *Colossus* is composed of parts; the *demigod* is a collective being. The greatest *genius* will never be worth much, if he pretend to draw exclusively from his own resources. *What is Genius*, but the faculty of seizing and turning to account everything that strikes us; of co-ordinating and breathing life into all the materials that present themselves; of taking here marble, there brass, and building a lasting monument with them? The most original young Painter, who thinks he owes everything to his Invention, cannot, *if he really has genius*, come into the room in which we are now sitting, and look around at the drawings with which it is hung, without going out a different man from what he came in, and with a new supply of ideas; what should I be, what would remain to me, if *this act of appropriation* were considered as derogatory to *genius*? What have I done? I have collected and turned to account all that I have seen, observed, heard: I have put in requisition the works of nature and of man. Every one of my writings has been furnished to me by a thousand different persons, a thousand different things; the learned and the ignorant, the wise and the foolish, infancy and age, have come in turn, generally without having the least suspicion of it, to bring me the offspring of their thoughts, their faculties, their experience. They have sown the harvest I have reaped. GOETHE.

But, I am bold to say, had Goethe done nothing more than *appropriate*, He would not have been entitled to the appellation of *genius*. *Appropriation* is not derogatory to *genius*, but, it does *not* constitute it — Goethe was a *genius*, be-

cause he possessed and exercised the faculty of *invention*. Is there no such thing as an *Inventive faculty*, distinct from all the rest? then, let *appropriation* be considered *genius*, as intimated by Johnson and Goethe — two giants in the intellectual world, against whom, were I not possessed of the right of private judgement, I should hesitate to cast this stone.

There is a pithy definition of this questionable word, in a recent publication —

*Genius* consists in practice outstripping theory.

GARBETT'S *Principles of Design in Architecture*. 1850. but, I cannot accept this definition; it does not embody the *soul of genius*. The following extract is from Gerard —

*Genius* is, properly, *the faculty of Invention*; by means of which, a man is qualified for making new *discoveries* in science, or, for producing *original* works of art. We may ascribe *taste*, *judgement*, or *knowledge*, to a man who is *incapable of invention*; but, we cannot reckon him a man of *genius*. In order to determine how far he merits that character, we must inquire — whether he has discovered any *new* principle in science? or, invented any *new* art? or, carried those arts, which are already practised to a *higher* degree of perfection than former masters? or, whether at least, in matters of science, he has *improved* on the discoveries of his predecessors, and reduced principles, formerly known, to a greater degree of simplicity or consistence? or traced them through a train of consequences hitherto unknown? or, in the arts designed some *new* work, different from those of his predecessors, though, perhaps, not excelling them? Whatever falls short of this, is servile imitation, or, a dull effort of plodding industry, which, as not implying *invention*, can be deemed *no proof of genius*, whatever capacity, skill, or diligence it may evidence. But, if a man shows *invention*, no intellectual defects which his performance may betray, can forfeit his claim to *genius*. His *invention* may be irregular, wild, undisciplined, but still, it is regarded as an infallible mark of *real natural genius*: and the degree of this faculty that we ascribe to him, is always in proportion to our estimate of the novelty, the difficulty, or the dignity of his *invention*.

This comes much nearer than the 3 former extracts, to my conception of *genius*; reminding me of what Cogan has written

*Genius* was originally deemed supernatural ; the happy possessor was supposed to hold converse with a superior order of beings, and it was thought the Genii themselves immediately *inspired* him with his super-eminent powers !

But, whichever of the preceding definitions my readers may be disposed to accept, Shakespeare still remains pre-eminent ; for the annals of literature do not furnish us with the record of any one who has *appropriated* and *invented* so much and so admirably. Persons of every age, sex, and station, may gather important information from his pages ; his delineation of Character was so comprehensive, that it grasped all diversities from the dawning of infancy to second childishness — not merely with equal *truth*, but, with equal *speciality* : and this is my reason for recommending those who earnestly desire to obtain a knowledge of *themselves*, to give their days and nights to the pages of Shakespeare, whose *philosophy* pierces everywhere — and on whatever it rests, whether animate or inanimate, like the refulgent god of day, it illumines what lay concealed, or, matures what it finds imperfect. In the *Tempest*, he has anticipated nearly all the arguements [not *arguments*] that Philosophers have since propounded on the so-called *Utopian-schemes* of modern philosophy ; and while his goodness is as boundless as the ocean, his humanity is as deep — he is the poet of humanity, the chief of moralists, and the prince of philosophers.

Virtuous and Vicious every man *must* be ;

Few in the extreme ; but all in the degree : POPE.  
philosophers, however, have defined *virtue* variously — Dr. Clarke calls *that* virtue, which is agreeable to external fitness — Burlamaqui *that* which is consonant with right reason — Wollaston *that* which is the truth of things — Hume, and also Godwin, *that* which is conducive to general utility — Mandeville insists that virtue depends upon opinion — Hutcheson that it is the dictate of the moral sense — Ellis regards it as the impulse of a sensation — and Adam Smith considers it to be founded on the dictates of sympathy — Helvetius maintains that “ virtue is the habitude of directing our actions to the public-good ; the love of virtue, is but the desire of general happiness ; virtuous actions are those which contribute to that happiness ” — and, in Bucke’s opinion, “ *this* appears to be an unchangeable truth, applica-

ble to all ages and stages of society, and that it atones for many errors." In the 10th Satire of Juvenal, according to Dryden's translation, "the path to Peace is virtue" — and Pope closes his masterly Essay on Man with the declaration,

That Virtue *only*, makes our bliss below ;  
And all our knowledge is — *ourselves* to know !

And, what says the Genius of the British Isles —

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn ; *good* and *ill* together : our *virtues* would be proud, if our *faults* whipped them not ; and our *crimes* would despair, if they were not cherished by our *virtues*. *All's Well &c.*

He also teaches us, that *virtue* ought not to be *inactive* —

Heaven doth with us, as we with torches do —  
Not light them for themselves ; for, if our Virtues  
Did not go forth from us, 'twere all alike

As if we had them not : *Measure for Measure.*

He tells us, "We are born to do Benefits ;" and he prettily illustrates the far spreading influence of *virtue*, on Portia's seeing the light in her house, while still at a considerable distance —

That light we see is burning in my hall ;  
How *far* that little candle throws its beams !  
So shines a *good deed* in a naughty world :

and he carefully inculcates, that *virtue* is the only true nobility —

From lowest place when *virtuous* things proceed,  
The place is dignified by the doer's deed :

Where great additions swell, and *virtue* none,

It is a dropsièd honor : GOD ALONE

Is good — without a name, vileness is so :

The property by *what it is* should go,

Not by the title. Honors best thrive

When rather from our *acts* we them derive

Than our fore-goers : *All's Well &c.*

he also tells us,

Virtue is *bold*, and Goodness *never fearful*.

Without discussing the question of Shakespeare's individual *virtue* or *vice*, I wish to impress on the minds of my ductile readers, that Shakespeare is *not yet* appreciated according to his merits, nor his merits estimated according to their intrinsic value. Notwithstanding all our talk about Shakespeare, all our dissertations and lectures on Shakespeare, he is but very partially known, even among the "liberally educated classes," in 1854.

If it be true, that "Criticism is not a captious but a liberal art," how ought we to designate those writers, who are incessantly searching after *defects*, rather than beauties? and going out of their way for the sole purpose of exposing and exhibiting whatever may not be in accordance with their individual views? Are these *Critics*? or, *Would-be-Critics*? Though a reviewer, commentator, critic, ought not to countenance, nor pass unnoticed, such Errors as may chance to fall in his way; yet, there is something ungracious and annoying, in any man's *scenting out* another's venial and unintentional mishaps or shortcomings—and what a host of these troublesome, waspish, snarling gentry, have fastened upon Shakespeare! Some of them seem desirous of persuading us, that his blemishes are far more numerous than his beauties; others would fairly erase him out of our minds, though they cannot expunge him out of our literature; for, as Johnson has elegantly remarked—

The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other Poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare.

*Preface to Shakespeare.*

Such of my readers as have had the patience to read this essay thus far, already know that the Writings of Shakespeare constitute *a species of study* in themselves; and that without *a special study* he cannot be adequately appreciated.

Our philosophic dramatist, very judiciously, chose popular subjects for the groundwork of his Plays. Had he restricted himself to purely philosophical topics and treated them philosophically only, none but philosophers could have apprehended them, none but philosophers would have admired them; but, like a sage teacher of truth and wisdom, he humored the popular beliefs and allured all classes to become his auditors—taking special care to instill better and nobler and purer principles and precepts and sentiments into his Plays, than are to be found in the writings of any of his cotemporaries, whether dramatists, philosophers, or divines. We need no other proof of his superiority of judgement and versatility of talent, than his power and tact to command the attention and admiration of the greatest geniuses and most brilliant wits, at the same time that he allured and captivated the lowest of the people, together with all the intermediate classes. His Witches were attractive, his Fools were attractive, his Ghosts were attractive, his Mar-

tial characters were attractive; and he had the consummate skill to make *all* of them instrumental in communicating mental light and dispelling mental darkness. His Witches and Ghosts especially, were alluring objects to both high and low; and much as he has been ridiculed and condemned, by short-sighted critics, for "such baby and puerile weaknesses and follies," He never exacted more belief from his mixed auditories than they were prepared to give. Let those who doubt this assertion, turn to the records of ghost stories and haunted houses, then so common; let them open "the famous and true account" given by King James of "the practices and illusions of *Evil spirits*, the compacts of *Witches*, their ceremonies, the manner of detecting them, and the justice of punishing them," in that sage monarch's work "*Dæmonology*;" let them read the famous Act of Parliament passed in the first year of that celebrated Defender of the Faith's reign, wherein it is enacted, that —

If any person shall use any invocation or conjuration of any evil or wicked spirit; 2. Or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil or cursed spirit to or for any intent or purpose; 3. Or take up any dead man, woman, or child out of the grave — or the skin, bone, or any part of the dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sórcery, charm, or enchantment; 4. Or shall use, practise, or exercise any sort of witchcraft, sórcery, charm, or enchantment; 5. Whereby any person shall be destroyed, killed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in any part of the body; 6. That every such person, being convicted, shall suffer *death*.

*Chap. xii.*

It is sickening to meet with men setting themselves up as Critics on Shakespeare, who seem not to know anything which they ought to know of the history of the period in which Shakespeare lived; Critics who neither know the literature nor the customs nor the teachings of Shakespeare's age; who, as his own Nathaniel says —

Sir, he hath never fed on the dainties that are bred in a Book; he hath not eat Paper, as it were; he hath not drunk Ink: his intellect is not replenished!

and we know, from their criticisms, that several of Shakespeare's accusers knew not that throughout Europe, *witch-*

*craft* was, to all intents and purposes, *an article of religious faith* during the 15th and 16th centuries; and that, according to the letter both of the Scriptures and the Civil-law, *witchcraft* was punishable with *death*. One of the enactments of Moses, was — Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to live — Exodus, xxii, 18: and our sage James, after the lapse of thousands of years, was not a whit in advance of Moses, who was, perhaps, far ahead of all his cotemporaries. In Shakespeare's day, the prejudice, imposture, and cruelty, relating to *witchcraft* received the solemn sanction of the most learned and devout men; professed Gospel ministers, of all degrees, from popes to presbyters; kings, legislators, judges; all ranks, qualities, and professions of private citizens: *all* looked upon *witchcraft* as a reality, as a deep and deadly sin, and *all* were alike strenuous in putting the accused to *torture* and to *death*.

In Geneva 500 *witches* were burned within 3 months, in 1515. Within a year, 1,000 were executed in the diocese of Como, in the north of Italy. Upwards of 100,000 perished in Germany during the *witch-mania*. In France the belief in *witchcraft* led to a notable superstition, known in the French law as *lycanthropy*, or, the transformation of a *witch* into a *wolf*. In Scotland the mania ran high during the reign of Mary (the cotemporary of Elizabeth) for, in 1591, vast numbers of unfortunate beings were burned to death on the Castle-hill of Edinburgh, for "the damnable crime of *witchcraft*." The clergy were the great *witch-hunters*; and the Assembly passed condemnatory Acts in 1640, 43, 44, 45, and 1649; and with each successive Act (according to historical records) the cases and convictions increased with "a deeper degree" of attendant horrors — and yet, mark well my readers, these Acts were passed half a century later than when Shakespeare penned his faithfully true to nature *witch-scenes* in *Macbeth*, for which he is now so stupidly held up to ridicule! *Witchcraft*, always penal in England, became the subject of express Statutes under Henry VII, Elizabeth, and James I; and thousands suffered *death* for this uncommittable crime, while Shakespeare was busy writing for the Stage! In the era of the Long-parliament 3,000 persons perished during the sitting of that "wise and learned body," by legal executions, and many by summary deaths while in the hands of the mobs. A period of relaxation (not *cessation*)



from these inhuman cruelties, came with the Restoration; and the honored and honorable names of such partially enlightened men as Sir Matthew Hale, Sir Thomas Browne (the well known Author of *Popular Fallacies*) the great and good Baxter, and Cotton Mather, together with scores and hundreds of lawyers, physicians, and divines, *believed in witchcraft!* and Barrington estimates the persons put to death in this *christian* England of ours, at 30,000!

Surely, I may be excused from any further vindication of Shakespeare's use of *witches* in his dramas, which so faithfully held the mirror up to Nature.

A recent and violent critique, which I shall not keep alive by copying into this essay, is ill-naturedly hard upon "Shakespeare's belief in Augury," in a comment on the lines given to Macbeth —

It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood;  
 Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;  
*Augurs*, and understood relations, have  
 By magot-pies,\* and choughs, and rooks, brought forth  
 The secret'st man of blood. [*\*maggot*]

—but, this accuser seems not to have read Shakespeare with even ordinary attention; he has overlooked what Macbeth is made to say in correction —

And be these juggling fiends no more believed,  
 That palter with us in a double\* sense; [*\*doubble*]  
 That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
 And break it to our hope.

—he seems never to have read the philosophic Hamlet —

*Hamlet.* Thou wouldst not think, how ill all's here about my heart; but, it is no matter.

*Horatio.* Nay, good my lord —

*Hamlet.* It is but foolery; but, it is such a kind of gain giving, as would, perhaps, trouble [*trouble*] a woman.

*Horatio.* If your mind dislike anything, obey; I will forestall their repair hither, and say, you are not fit.

*Hamlet.* Not a whit! *we defy augury*; there's a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet, it will come: *the readiness is all.*

The extraordinarily enlightened Shakespeare's individual opinion upon Auguries and Omens, is palpably visible to all but the poreblind; for, while he admits the belief to be expressed, he carefully aims at its eradication —

*Glendower.* Sit, cousin Percy; sit, good cousin Hotspur,  
For by that name as oft as Lancaster\* [\*Henry IV.  
Doth speak of You, his cheek looks pale, and, with  
A rising\* sigh, he wisheth you in heaven. [\*not risen

*Hotspur.* And you in hell, as often as he hears  
Owen Glendower spoke of.

*Glen.* I cannot blame him; at my nativity  
The front of heaven was full of fiery\* shapes, [\*pro-  
Of burning cressets; and, at my birth, [perly *firey*  
'The frame and huge foundation of the earth,  
Shaked\* like a coward. [not *shook*

*Hot.* Why, so it would have done  
At the same season, if your mother's Cat  
Had kittened, though yourself had ne'er been born.

*Glen.* I say, the earth did shake when I was born!

*Hot.* And I say, the earth was not of my mind,  
If you suppose, as fearing You it shook.

*Glen.* The heavens were all on fire, the earth did tremble!

*Hot.* O, then, the earth shook to see the heavens on fire,  
And not in fear of your nativity.  
Diseas'd nature oftentimes breaks forth  
In strange eruptions: oft the teeming earth  
Is with a kind of colic pinched and vexed,  
By the imprisoning of unruly\* wind [\*unrulely  
Within her womb; which, for enlargement striving,  
Shakes the old beldame earth, and topples down  
Steeple, and moss-grown towers. At your birth,  
Our grandam earth, having this distemperature,  
In passion shook.

*Glen.* Cousin, of many men  
I do not bear these crossings. Give me leave  
To tell you once again — that, at my birth,  
The front of heaven was full of fiery\* shapes; [\**firey*,  
The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds  
Were strangely clam'rous to the frightened fields.  
These signs have marked me extraordinary,\* [6 syl.  
And all the courses of my life do show,  
I am not in the roll of common men.  
Where is the\* living — clipped in with the sea [\*not *he*  
That chides the banks of England, Scotland, Wales —  
Which calls me *pupil*, or, hath read to me?  
And bring him out, that is but woman's son,

Can trace me in the tedious ways of art,  
And hold me pace in deep experiments.

*Hot.* I think, there is no man — speaks better Welch —  
I'll to dinner.

*Mortimer.* Peace, cousin Percy; you will make him mad.

*Glen.* I can call Spirits from the vasty deep!

*Hot.* Why, so can I; or so can any man:

But, will they *come*, when you do *call* for them? [*Devil.*

*Glen.* Why, I can teach thee, cousin, to command the

*Hot.* And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the Devil —

*By telling Truth* — tell Truth, and shame the Devil.

If thou have power to raise him, bring him hither,

And I'll be sworn, I've power to shame him hence.

O, while you live, tell Truth, and shame the Devil.

*First Part of Henry IV.*

Had not Shakespeare disbelieved in *omens*, he would not have taken such pains to expose the preposterousness of the belief in the magician Glendower, and to have laughed at them through that child of nature, Hotspur. Had the dramatist not wished to lead his auditors *to use their reason*, to lead them to seek for the solution of strange appearances and strange things, by other and more rational modes than *omens* and *miracles*, he would not have thrown the popular prejudices into such marked disrepute, as he so repeatedly did —

*Bish. of Ely.* The strawberry grows underneath the nettle;

And wholesome berries thrive and ripen best

Neighbour'd by fruit of baser quality:

And so the Prince obscured his contemplation

Under the veil of wildness; which, no doubt,

Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,

Unseen, yet cressive\* in his faculty. [*\*crescive*

*Archbishop.* It must be so; for, *miracles are ceased*;

And, therefore, we must needs admit *the means*

How things are perfected.

And, in All's Well that Ends Well, our philosophic dramatist has communicated his superior penetration in unmistakable terms —

*Lafeu.* They say, *miracles are past*; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar things, *supernatural* and *causeless*. Hence is it, that we make trifles of terrors; ensconcing ourselves into

*seeming* knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear.

Addison judiciously observed, a century and a half ago —

Our forefathers looked upon Nature with more reverence and horror, before the world was enlightened by learning and philosophy; and loved to astonish themselves with the apprehensions of *witchcraft, prodigies, charms, and enchantments*. There was not a village in England that had not a *ghost* in it; the churchyards were all *haunted*; every large common had a circle of *fairies* belonging to it; and there was scarce a shepherd to be met with, who had *not seen a spirit*.

That noble extravagance of fancy, which Shakespeare had in so great perfection, thoroughly qualified him to touch this weak superstitious part of his reader's imagination, and made him capable of succeeding, where he had nothing to support him besides the strength of his own genius. There is something so wild, and yet so solemn, in the speeches of his ghosts, fairies, witches, and like imaginary persons, that we cannot forbear thinking them natural, though we have no rule by which to judge of them, and must confess, if there are such beings in the world, it looks highly probable they should talk and act as he has represented them.

*Spectator*. 1 July, 1712.

Had Shakespeare himself believed in *ghosts*, he never would have circulated such plainly uttered expressions of *disbelief* as we find in his writings — such, for instance, as that in *The Winter's Tale*:

Come, poor babe;

I have heard, but, *not believed*, the Spirits of the dead  
May walk again: if such things be, thy Mother  
Appeared to me, last night; for ne'er was Dream  
So like a Waking. Dreams are toys;

Yet, for this once, yea, *superstitiously*,

I will be squared by this.

— but enough! I shall not pursue these points farther; because, every well-read Shakesperean knows, that our philosophic dramatist did *not* believe in Augury, Omens, Miracles, Witches, Ghosts; that he was ages in advance of his cotemporaries; and though he introduced the popular

notions and prejudices and superstitions of his age into his dramas, he carefully rendered them subservient to the impartation of knowledge and the dispersion of ignorance. He made use of the weaknesses and fallacies then prevalent, to cultivate reason and irradiate truth. As "rare Tom Miller" sings —

Shakespeare unlocked man's heart, laid bare a world,  
 Distilled its crimes and beauties; and then, flew  
 To his own mighty mind, and from it hurled  
 A new creation: forms that never grew  
 Beneath a mother's eye, before him moved,  
 And, as He chose, they lived, and wept, and laughed, and  
 [loved.

Often, when reading the perverted meanings given to Shakespeare's sentiments, or, the gross misconceptions of his Critics, I am reminded of the expressions he has given to Wolsey, as they are, more or less, applicable to himself —

If I am  
 Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know  
 My faculties, nor person, yet will be  
 The Chronicles of my doing — let me say,  
 'Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake  
 That virtue must go through.

What we oft do best,  
 By sick Interpreters, once\* weak ones, is [*\*sometimes*  
*Not ours, or, not allowed*; what worst, as oft,  
 Hitting a grosser quality, is cried up  
 For our best act!

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## CHAPTER IX.

*Punning — one of the freaks of the Shakesperean age.*

Shakespeare, *the Genius of our Isle*, whose mind  
 (The universal mirror of mankind)  
 Expressed all images, enriched the Stage,  
 But, sometimes, stooped to please a barb'rous Age.

FENTON.

If there be any subjects connected with Shakespeare, not *generally* interesting to Shakesperean readers, *Punning* is one of them; and yet, this very topic has enthusiastic combatants: I shall give it a Chapter apart, that it may be read or passed, at pleasure.

*What is a Pun?* A play upon words — with or without Wit. Lexicographers give several definitions; Critics still more.

Addison has furnished us with a test, whereby we may know whether a piece of real Wit has been achieved, or a mere Pun perpetrated; he directs us to translate the doubtful production into another language — if it pass through this ordeal unharmed; it is *Wit*; if untranslatable, it is a *Pun*. Yet, Bucke has shown, by examples in Greek, Latin, and French, translated into English, that some Puns can smuggle themselves into the regions of Wit, in spite of Addison's prohibiting law — just as some foreigners, who are perfect masters of the language, can enter a country in spite of Alien acts.

A punster, on being requested to give a specimen of his skill, asked for a subject; when some one gave *The King*: "the King is not a Subject," he instantly returned. This is equally good in French — *le Roi n'est pas un Sujet*. And there are many such.

During the reign of Buonaparte, when an arrogant soldiery affected to despise all civilians, Talleyrand asked one of the generals, What was meant by calling the people *pequins* (that is, *miserable creatures*) when the general said, *Nous appellons pequin tout ce qui n'est pas militaire* (We call every one who is not a soldier, a *pequin*) Talleyrand retorted, *Eh, oui! comme nous autres nous appellons Militaires tous ceux qui ne sont pas Civiles* (O, yes! as we call Military all those who are not Civil)

More examples are unnecessary, for, they abound in various languages; and a clever punster may drive his coach and six through Addison's act.

Coleridge tells us, very gravely,

I have no hesitation in saying, that a Pun, if it be congruous with the feeling of the scene, is not only allowable in the dramatic dialogue, but oftentimes one of the most effectual intensives of passion.

*Notes and Lectures.*

— but, he ought to have given us a couple of examples.

Dr. Johnson writes, in his Preface to Shakespeare —

A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapours [*vapors*] are to the traveller [*traveler*] he follows it at all adventures: it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf [*ingulf*] him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

*Works.* vol. X. p. 149.

No, no, Doctor; you have overcharged your complaint; and the knowledge you possessed was *not present* to your mind, while penning that paragraph: had another said half as much to the depreciation of Shakespeare, on that point, in your hearing, Boszy would have recorded an able defense [*not defence*] from your lips.

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Here I shall take the opportunity, of not simply expressing my high respect for Dr. Johnson, but, of entering my Protest against the present fashionable outcry made by the very men, who, probably, might never have discovered his *defects*, had it not been for the light which he imparted to them. Johnson, whatever he was besides, was a *true* man. He did not, as Carlyle observes, engrave *Truth* on his watch-

seal, but he stood by *truth*, spoke and wrote by it, worked and lived by it. And I like Carlyle the better for his appreciation and estimation of Johnson. It may be unfashionable to write thus reverently of a man who is now disesteemed by so many men; who is abused by writers of some reputation; but, I throw fashion to the dogs, as Macbeth would have thrown inefficient physic, and I hesitate not to avow *my reverence* for Johnson, for the lessons of moral-philosophy and wisdom and goodness he has taught me: I have read all his works, more than once, and I acknowledge myself under lasting obligations to Johnson; nor am I afraid nor ashamed to confess it in the face of all his Disparagers. I do not consider myself under any obligation to Macauley, nor will the reading public generally think more highly of him, either as a man or a writer, for having stated, that Johnson "was undoubtedly an excellent [*excellent*] judge of compositions fashioned on his own principles. But, when a deeper philosophy was required, when he undertook to pronounce judgment [*judgement*] on the works of those great minds which "yield homage only to eternal laws," his failure was ignominious. He criticized Pope's *Epitaphs* excellently. But, his observations on Shakespeare's Plays and Milton's Poems seem to us, for the most part, as *wretched* as if they had been written by *Rymer himself*, whom we take to have been *the worst critic that ever lived*.

*Review of Croker's ed. of Boswell's life of Johnson.*

Now, I pity Macauley's judgement, if such be *an honest* statement of his Opinion.

Knight too, has egregiously overshot the mark, when, writing of the influence which Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare has had on the public mind, he pens the following (and other similar) notions —

That the influence has been, for the most part, *evil*, we have no hesitation in believing!

I have not any reason to believe any such thing — and I have probably had more opportunities of judging, from actual observations and immediate knowledge of its effects, than ever fell to the lot of Shakespeare's idolizer — thousands have been induced to read Shakespeare, solely from Johnson's Preface, which, though not so favorable as Knight might have wished, has had, I verily believe, not an *evil*, but a *good* influence.



The Rev. Dr. Symmons also, in his so-called *Life of Shakespeare* (1825) has disgraced himself by publishing several unhandsome and indefensible slights on Johnson; and Hazlitt, and a whole string of puny critics, have cast dirt and pebbles at the "Colossus of English Literature"—

A man, who would have foiled at their own play,

A dozen Would-bees of the modern day;

Who, when occasion justified its use,

Had wit (as bright as ready) to produce;

Could fetch from records of an earlier age,

Or, from philosophy's enlightened page,

His rich materials; and regale your ear

With strains it was a privilege to hear.

COWPER.

Dr. Beaumont was not ashamed of Johnson, when he proclaimed in the hearing of thousands, in Exeter Hall—

No matter, though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling, if the Sacred writers will enter and take up their abode under my roof; if Milton will cross my threshold, to sing to me of Paradise; if Pascal will pour the hallowed riches of his first-born genius into my ear, and if Johnson will come to enrich me with his strong sense!

*Lecture on the Acquisition of Knowledge.* 1847 — 8.

That strange compound, Thomas Carlyle, who is more than a match for Macauley, Knight, and Symmons combined, is not in the list of Johnson's depreciators — neither is he among Johnson's blind admirers —

As for Johnson, I have always considered him to be, by nature, one of our great English souls. A strong and noble man; so much left undevelopped [*undeveloped*] in him to the last: in a kindlier element what might he not have been — Poet, Priest, Sovereign Ruler! Figure him there, with his scrofulous diseases, with his great greedy heart, and unspeakable chaos of thoughts; stalking mournful as a stranger in this Earth; eagerly devouring what spiritual thing he could come at: school-languages and other merely grammatical stuff, if there were nothing better! *The largest soul that was in all England*; and provision made for it of "fourpence halfpenny a day." Yet, a giant invincible soul; a true man's.

Johnson's writings, which once had such currency and celebrity, are now as it were disowned by the

young generation. It is not wonderful; Johnson's opinions are fast becoming obsolete: but, his style of thinking and of living, we may hope, will never become obsolete. I find in Johnson's Books the indisputable traces of a great intellect and great heart—ever welcome, under what obstructions and perversions soever. They are *sincere* words those of his; he means *things* by them.

*The Hero as Man of Letters.* 1840.

It cannot be denied, that Shakespeare was a Quibbler, a Punster; and though I readily concede that an occasional play upon words constituted an excellence in his writings, as giving us Specimens of that particular impress of the "Age and body of the Time" in which he wrote; yet, my admiration of some Puns, does not prevent my looking upon a superabundance of them as derogatory—as decided blemishes to his transcendent beauties. I do not, wide-awake reader, require to be reminded of Johnson's couplet already inserted on p. 24 —

The drama's Laws the drama's *patrons* give;

For, we that live to please, *must please* to live:

and should any of my readers insist on the *necessity* of Shakespeare's having punned and quibbled, in order to tickle the ears and fancies of his auditors, I would not even endeavor to invalidate such arguments; yet, I am bold to affirm, that He frequently carried such frivolities to excess; and I have his own high authority for condemning such excesses—witness Hamlet's observation to Horatio, on what he calls the *equivocations* of the Grave-digger; together with other decidedly condemnatory passages. Shakespeare's *good taste* induced him to censure the very frivolity he himself committed—to indulge the so-called *taste* of the age. For instance (after certain quibbles had been bandied about) Lorenzo exclaims—

*How every fool can play upon the Word!* I think the best grace of Wit will shortly turn into silence; and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots. Go in, sirrah; bid them prepare for dinner.

*Launcelot.* That is done, sir; they have all stomachs.

*Lorenzo.* Goodly lord, what a *wit-snapper* are you! then, bid them prepare dinner.

*Launcelot.* That is done, too, sir; only *cover* is the word.

*Lorenzo.* Will you cover then, sir?

*Launcelot.* Not so, sir, neither; I know my duty.

*Lorenzo.* Yet more quarrelling [*quarreling*] with occasion! Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy Wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in *his plain meaning*—go to thy fellows, bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner.

*Launcelot.* For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humors and conceits shall govern. [*Exit Launcelot.*]

*Lorenzo.* O dear discretion, how his *words* are suited!

The fool hath planted in his memory  
An army of good words; and I do know  
A many fools, that stand in better place,  
Garnished like him, that for a *tricksy word*  
Defy the matter.

How often Shakespeare has exposed and censured the Punning practices,

As full of labor as a wise man's art, *Twelfth Night.*  
know not; but, that he did discountenance and condemn it, again and again, I well know—

*Clown.* A *sentence* is but a cheveril glove to a good Wit; how quickly the wrong side may be turned outwards!

*Viola.* Nay, that's certain; they that dally nicely with *words* may quickly *make* them wanton. Art not thou the lady Olivia's fool?

*Clown.* I am, indeed, not her fool, but her *corrupter of words.*

*Viola.* This fellow is wise enough to *play the fool*; and to do that well, craves a *kind* of wit.

—and even in such fashionable and courtierlike punnings as those of the Lord Chamberlain—quite in character with the Lord and Lady *corrupters of Words* at the Court of Elizabeth—the dramatist skilfully inserted the admonitory lines—

*Polonius.* Therefore, since brevity is the soul of Wit,  
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,  
I will be brief—

thus correcting, while practising, “the vices of the age.”

Were it necessary to apologize for Shakespeare's *playing upon words*, it is possible I could do it as plausibly as some of his poreblind admirers; for, to confess a truth, I once

entered the lists against about a dozen Professors at a certain University (where I was delivering a Course of Lectures on English Literature) and I successfully maintained *the Propriety* of Shakespeare's alledged [not alleged] weakness of Punning — but, be it known to my junior readers especially, I then combated for *victory*, not *truth*; and though I beat my opponents out of the arena, I certainly had the worst of the argument. Never, my readers, never dispute for *disputation's sake*; never dispute for *victory*; let Truth be your object throughout life: it is upwards of a quarter of a century since I gained that victory, and I have been more or less *ashamed* of it ever since; it has a thousand times been a source of mortification to me — do You profit by my weakness and chagrin.

Among other things, I showed that Punning was *natural* to man, to men of all climes; in as much as it is invariably practised by sharp-witted Children, and is found in the earlier writings of all Nations and Peoples and Tongues — the Books of Moses (as they are called, though probably written by Ezra and others) are full of Puns. I adduced the authority of Homer, who wrote his Puns 3,000 years ago. I referred my antagonists to a variety of celebrated writers, daily in their hands — such as Petrarch, among the poets; Cicero, among the orators; Sophocles, among the dramatists — thereby endeavoring to justify Shakespeare's vice of Punning, by authority; I had not then learned, that what is radically wrong, no authority can make right. I produced many examples from Shakespeare's predecessors and cotemporaries, and took some pains to prove that Punning was not less practised by Bacon, the father of modern philosophy, than by Shakespeare, the father of the modern drama. I then quoted authorities of later date, and gave examples from the pulpits, and from works wherein Puns might be supposed to have been altogether excluded — such as *Paradise Lost*, which furnished me with a score of very indifferent Puns in the first 6 books only; I quoted Swift's often repeated saying —

No one despises Puns, but those who cannot make them: and added a whole regiment of examples from the Wits of the present century — not forgetting Erskine's, who, on being reproached with his propensity of Punning, and told that Puns were the *lowest* kind of wit, replied —

True! and, therefore, they are the very *foundations* of Wit.

The Professors entrenched themselves behind the short-sighted criticisms of the French aspersers of Shakespeare's fame; but, I succeeded in beating them out of their trenches; I proved to their satisfaction, that at the very time Shakespeare was copying the fashion of Punning from the Court of Elizabeth, the French writers and choice Wits were copying the like puerility from the Court of the great Henry IV. I proved that Punning was carried to greater excess in France than in England, giving a long list of serious quarrels among the higher classes, as recorded by Monsieur Seri, who scrupled not to reproach Henry for promoting such practices by his example, averring, that *raillery* and *punning* invariably diminish that reverence which is due to Princes. I then showed that Punning, in Shakespeare's time, was not restricted to England and France, but, that it infested all the Courts of Europe; and that other princes besides our sage James, prided themselves in being adepts at Punning. All my aim was *victory*, and that I obtained; yet, I did not thereby raise Shakespeare one iota in the estimation of my defeated opponents — they were conquered, not convinced. I fancied, at the time, that I had achieved something great, something to be talked about, something not easily to be forgotten; and *that victory* tended to strengthen certain notions I then possessed about my being, or likely to be, a very clever fellow: I had not then discovered —

Knowledge is *proud*, that he has learned so much;

Wisdom is *humble*, that he knows no more. COWPER.

But, to proceed — When Lady Constance exclaims

O, lawful let it be,

That I have *room* with *Rome* to curse awhile!

when Cassius says to Brutus,

Now is it *Rome* indeed, and *room* enough,

When there is in it but One only man!

or, when Antony plays upon the word,

Here is a mourning *Rome*, a dangerous *Rome*,

No *room* of safety for Octavius yet —

we do not feel any annoyance at the sportiveness; but, we feel repugnance at the dying John of Gaunt *punning* on his own name, at such an untimely season:

*King*. What comfort, man? How is't with aged Gaunt?

*Gaunt*. O, how *that name* befits my composition!

*Old Gaunt*, indeed; and *gaunt* in being old:

Within me grief hath kept a tedious fast;  
 And who abstains from meat, that is not *gaunt*?  
 For sleeping England long time have I watched;  
 Watching breeds leanness, leanness is all *gaunt*:  
 The pleasure that some fathers feed upon,  
 Is my strict fast — I mean my children's looks;  
 And, therein fasting, hast thou made me *gaunt*;  
*Gaunt* am I for the grave, *gaunt* as a grave,  
 Whose hollow womb inherits naught but bones.

*King*. Can sick men *play so nicely* with their names?

*Gaunt*. No; misery makes sport to mock itself:

Since thou dost seek to kill my Name in me,

I mock my name, great King, to flatter thee.

— now, learned reader, save yourself the trouble of endeavoring to exculpate Shakespeare on the plea, that “the ancients did so before him;” a similar Pun in the Ajax of Sophocles, is as much a blemish as Shakespeare’s Pun in Richard II. and, believe it or not, Shakespeare himself could not convert such a blemish into a beauty.

After all, this *Shakespeare* of ours, was *but a man*; and surely we may be satisfied with his greatness, without insisting on his infallibility. Is it not enough, that I acknowledge Him as

The noblest Man

That ever livèd in the tide of times?

must I also join SCHLEGEL, KNIGHT, & Co. in shielding Shakespeare behind ESCHYLUS, EURIPIDES, & Co.? *that* I once did, and regret it; I could, if necessary, produce hundreds of Puns from modern writers, and from poems little suspected of such weaknesses and incongruities —

Thou, rather than thy justice should be *stained*,

Didst *stain* the cross —

*Night Thoughts.*

but, such examples would merely prove that others have been equally faulty, not that Shakespeare is justified through the faults of others. Besides, He himself has repeatedly censured the vice of Punning, and given us instances of his having *refrained* from adopting that vice of his age — witness Henry VIII. and Macbeth.

Hence, notwithstanding all I once publicly maintained, and despite all that Critics have written in favor, in justification, or in palliation of Punning, I am now decidedly of opinion, that had Shakespeare *quibbled* less, he would have excelled more — though I do not wish that he had never *punned at all*.

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## CHAPTER X.

*Shakespeare as a Philanthropist.**War and its Concomitants.*

Great princes have great playthings. Some have *played*  
 At hewing mountains into *men*; and some  
 At building human wonders mountain-high;  
 Some have *amused* the dull, sad years of life  
 (Life spent in indolence, and therefore sad)  
 With schemes of monumental fame, and sought,  
 By pyramids and mausolean pomp,  
 Short-lived themselves, to immortalize their bones:  
 Some seek *diversion* in the tented-field,  
 And make the sorrows of mankind their *sport*;  
 But, *War's a Game*, which, *were their Subjects wise*,  
 Kings would *not play at*! COWPER.

More than two centuries before the existence of the first *Peace Society*, the great poet of Humanity had the moral courage to inculcate all the pacific principles of the Friends of Peace; although he was an eyewitness to appalling [not *appaling*] persecutions for the utterance of such sentiments as he propagated, year after year, in his singularly philanthropic dramas. Despite the severe censureship of the Press, in the very faces of the lynx-eyed Archbishop of Canterbury and the vulture-eyed Bishop of London, with all their blood-thirsty Emissaries to boot, the undauntable Shakespeare continued to advocate the cause of *religious freedom* and to plead the *rights of humanity* —

Thrice is he armed, that hath his quarrel just!

In the first Part of Henry VI, our Moral-philosopher told the sticklers for *martial fame*, through Joan of Arc,

*Glory*, is like a circle in the water;

Which never ceaseth to enlarge itself,

'Till, by broad-spreading, it disperse to naught —

a volume contained in 3 lines! a striking *moral* and *political* lesson; which, though published 250 years ago, has not yet been laid to heart by British Rulers — witness our robberies and massacres in China and India, at Borneo and the Cape of Good Hope, together with the monstrosities perpetrated in the so-called *Burmese War*, though *war* it is none; it is, simply, an atrocious overpowering of *human*

*right by military might* — foul blots on our national character, libels on our pseudo-enlightenment, withering sarcasms on our boasted civilisation, stigmas on our profession of christianity! and, rely upon it, my readers, unless our Rulers speedily adopt Peace-principles in the further governance of this country and its foreign possessions, the *Martial glory of England*, will, by broad-spreading, disperse itself to naught. It is an alarming fact, that in 1854, every SIXTH acre of land on the face of this globe, is under British dominion, and every FIFTH human being under heaven, is, at this day a British subject! And, if causes continue to be followed by natural effects and our present state-policy be *not* abandoned, Great Britain must, at no very distant period, become utterly ruined through the destructive consequences of our “brilliant subjugations,” our “splendid campaigns,” and our “glorious naval victories.” Conquests are the preludes to the destruction of Conquerors — all histories prove it.

To me, there is something *prophetic* in the close of John of Gaunt’s dying speech, which Shakespeare has added (as a qualifier) to the most eloquent eulogy on England to be found in our language —

*That England, that was wont to conquer others,  
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself!*

for, every subjugating Nation we read of in history, has *ruined itself*, by its conquests; and, if our Rulers persist in carrying out their aggressive measures, England *must fall*, like all other conquering nations. War is *destructive*, not only in its success, but, in its consequences: the very nature of War, is — *destruction*. Witness the wars waged by Sesostris, in Egypt; by Nebuchadnezzar, in Syria; by Cyrus, in Persia; by the Romans, in Africa, Gaul, Spain, the Low-countries, Britain, and elsewhere; by the Spaniards, in Mexico and Peru — in short *all* wars, ancient and modern. Yet, strange infatuation! men still continue to follow the phantom, as if it had been *advantageous* to the nations that pursued it. But, has it really been so? *Has it been so!* let the dead empires of antiquity reply, in the ruined pyramids, temples, shrines, which strew their gigantic fragments on the banks of the Nile — in the silent desolations of entombed Nineveh, on the Tigris, and the site of Babylon, on the Euphrates — in the solitary avenues and fallen columns of Palmyra, in the desert — in the shat-



tered Acropolis of the once splendid Athens, and of the mouldering Coliseum of the once prouder Rome — together with all the other numerous scattered vestiges of by-gone greatness — the only remnants of these *conquering* nations ! And, if these do not answer in language sufficiently intelligible, let the 3 living nations, England, France, and America — present examples of conquest and subjugation — let these nations teach us the *emptiness of martial glory* and the ruinous *waste of war* ; for, it is a well-known fact, that these 3 aggressive nations are already so far advanced on the highroad to Ruin, that the maintenance of Naval and Military establishments, consumes  $\frac{7}{8}$  of the Income of these boastedly civilized, these pseudo-christian nations — But, enough !

My ear is pained,

My soul is sick, with every day's report

Of wrong and outrage with which Earth is filled.

There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart ;

It does not feel for Man : the natural bond

Of *brotherhood*, is severed — as the flax

That falls asunder at the touch of fire.

COWPER.

Shakespeare, true to nature, passes his severest censures on the criminalness of War, through the lips of the very men who are prominently guilty of the enormities. When the Duke of Wellington said, in his place in Parliament —

No man who has the least sympathy with Religion,  
has any business with the profession 'of Soldier —

not only were their Lordships startled at the declaration, but the whole intelligence of the country was roused to a sense of the appalling wickedness of War — for, his memorable words were spread throughout the land, in the columns of our Newspapers — the Duke's words corroborating the reiterated saying of Buonaparte —

The worse the Man, the better the Soldier ; if

Soldiers *be not corrupt*, they ought to be *made* so !

And my readers are probably aware, that the Duke repeatedly told his Peers, that, had they seen as much of the horrors of War, as he had witnessed, they would neither be so eager for it, nor speak so lightly respecting it. And the dramatist makes Troilus say, in reply to Hector, in reference to Helen —

Why, there you touched the life of our design :

Were it not *glory* that we more affected

Then the performance of our heavy spleens,

I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood  
 Spent more in her defense. But, worthy Hector,  
 She is a theme of *honor* and *renown*;  
 A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds,  
 Whose present courage may beat down our foes,  
 And *fame*, in time to come, canònize us:  
 For, I presume, brave Hector would not lose  
 So rich advantage of a *promised glory*,  
 For the whole world's revèue.

Shakespeare has carefully shown us, in a variety of passages, that the value of *fame*, *glory*, and the like, depends solely on *its source*; as when, in Richard II, he makes Norfolk say —

The purest treasure mortal times afford,  
 Is — *spotless reputation*; that away,  
 Men are but gilded loam, or, painted clay.

And, in Love's Labor's Lost, he informs us —

*Glory* grows guilty of detested crimes,  
 When, for *Fame's* sake, for praise, an outward part,  
 We bend to that the working of the heart.

And Milton, the ardent admirer of Shakespeare, has endeavored to impress upon our understandings,

If there be in *Glory* aught of good,  
 It may by means far different be attained;

*Without* ambition, war, or violence:

By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,

By patience, temperance.

In Henry V, Shakespeare exposes the crafty conduct of the professed Messengers of the Prince of Peace, who incite the King to make War on France. Though Henry cautions the "holy Prelates" against provoking him to war, though he lays before the "Right Reverend Fathers in God" the direful consequences of going to war, the Bishops continue to urge and even to bribe him on to battle and to bloodshed; the Archbishop of Canterbury offering,

To give a greater sum

Than ever, at one time, the Clergy yet

Did to his predecessors part withall.\* [\*not *withal*

Henry's speech to the Bishops shows, that, though a warrior in his heart, he is thoroughly conscious of the calamities of war, and of the atrocious crime of waging war under false pretences — but, the Speech is too good not to be quoted —

*Henry*. My learnèd lord, we pray you to proceed:

And justly and religiously unfold,

Why the law Salique, that they have in France,  
 Or should, or should not, bar us in our claim.  
 And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,  
 That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,  
 Or, nicely charge your understanding soul  
 With opening titles miscreate,\* whose right [\*spurious  
 Suits not in native colors with the Truth;  
 For, God doth know, how many, now in health,  
 Shall drop their blood in approbation\* [\*proving  
 Of what your Rev'rence shall incite us to:  
 Therefore, *take-heed* how you impawn our person,  
 How you awake our sleeping sword of War:  
 We charge you, in the name of God — *take-heed* —  
 For, never two such kingdoms did contend  
 Without much fall of blood; whose *guiltless* drops  
 Are every one a wo,\* a sore complaint, [\*wo, woes  
 'Gainst him whose wrongs give edge unto the swords  
 That make such waste in brief mortality.  
 Under this conjuration, speak, my lord:  
 For, we will hear, note, and believe in heart,  
 That what you speak is in your conscience washed  
 As pure as sin in baptism.

For this Speech, Shakespeare has been vehemently accused  
 of "incongruity, in putting such words into Henry's mouth,  
 seeing he loved fighting right dearly;" but, the all observant  
 dramatist knew, what his criticisers seem not to have known  
 — that men may condemn in *principle* what they adopt in  
*practice*. Take a well-known example in illustration —

When, a few years back, Sir Harry Smith was feasted at  
 the Mansion House, in compliment to his military success  
 in India, He, on returning thanks for the honor shown him  
 by the highly *civilized* and worthy *christians* of this *en-*  
*lightened* metropolis, uttered the following memorable words:

I appeal to my Brother-officers, now at this table, if  
 our profession is not *a damnable profession!*

yet, conscious as Sir Harry was of the heinous guilt attend-  
 ant upon War, no sooner was he appointed to the Command  
 of our abominable aggressions and outrages at the Cape of  
 Good Hope, than he set off to perpetrate the horrors of his  
 confessedly *damnable profession* — the Sir Harry of our  
 day, illustrating the propriety of the expressions given by  
 the Dramatist to his King Harry. In truth, my readers,

that critic must be grossly ignorant of human-nature, who has yet to learn, that a man may be really sincere in good *principles*, without having good *practice*.

When, after the Archbishop's recondite and able speech, Henry asks,

May I, with right and conscience, make this claim?  
the "Right Reverend Father in God" instantly replies —

The sin upon my head, dread Sovereign!

For, in the Book of Numbers is it writ —

*Book of Numbers!* so characteristically does Shakespeare make the Archbishop quote a barbarous *Jewish* authority, to justify a *Christian* King's killing the beings Christ died to save!

In Religion,

What damn'd error, but some sober brow

Will bless it, and approve it *with a text*,

Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

*Merchant of Venice.*

The knowledge, tact, and superiority of our incomparable Dramatist, pervade his writings throughout. He knew his Bible thoroughly, and, of course, he knew there was not a single passage in the New testament suited to the Archbishop's purpose; in as much as the precepts of Christ and his Apostles are opposed to *all* War, offensive and defensive; Shakespeare, therefore, in strict accordance with the tenets of the Anglican church, makes the *christian* Archbishop quote the *jewish* Lawgiver in justification of man-slaughter! This is one of the many master-strokes in Shakespeare, because, every way in keeping with our State-church doctrines. No episcopalian among my readers can take offense at the Dramatist's just representation of the *spirit* and *conduct* assigned to the Primate, who is supported in his Mosaic views and ratiocinations by the Bishop of Ely, who, like a true Son and Father of our Mother-church, exclaims —

Awake rememb'rance of these valiant dead,

And, with your puissant\* arm, renew their feats: [2 syl.

You are their heir, you sit upon their throne;

The blood and courage, that renown'd them,

Runs in your veins; and, my thrice-puissant liege

Is in the very May-morn of his youth,

Ripe for exploits and mighty enterprises.

I recommend my curious readers to peruse the whole of this masterly written scene, as you cannot but be pleased with the faithful and in nowise exaggerated Portraits, drawn by our master-artist, of the "Right Reverend Fathers in God;" and you will not find one feature of Caricature in them; they are true copies of life: you will not find them "painted monsters," but *men* — men of a like stamp with the Archbishops and Bishops of our own day, who, very devoutly, continue in the 19th century, to "consecrate and bless" our Military-banners; who, very religiously, exhort our Soldiery to deeds of daring and of blood; and who, very piously, compose special Prayers and public Thanksgivings to the beneficent Creator of *all* men, for the horrible butchery of 30,000 of our deeply injured fellow-creatures.

Although I am decidedly of opinion, that had the Pulpit done its *duty*, Wars would have ceased throughout the civilized world ages ago; yet, I have not now to learn the great, the indescribable difficulty of overcoming the *prejudices of education*; and that *forbearance* towards those who have had Mosaic principles instilled into them in childhood, cultivated by the Pulpit in riper years, is a *christian duty* in such as are more enlightened. I received what is denominated a *religious education*; and having been educated in this country, it was, of course, what we call a *christian education*; yet, during the long term of 40 years, though intimate with Gospel ministers of various denominations all my life, I really believed that *War was justifiable on Christian principles!* and it was not until I undertook to write a confutation of the *principles* of the much ridiculed *Peace Society*, that the scales fell from my eyes. The Bible was familiar to me, from childhood upwards; but, that I might controvert the advocates of *Non-resistance* on their own grounds, I sat down to the New testament, for the purpose of extracting such passages as favored my notions of the *warrantableness* of War on *christian principles*. I felt confident of success; and with pen, ink, and paper before me, I opened the book by Matthew; I read *with attention* — but, the *Sermon on the Mount* frustrated all my hopes; I was baffled, disappointed, nonplused; all my confidence was prostrated; I fell before it: I found that there was no such thing as mincing the matter; that evasion and subterfuge and reasoning, were alike impotent; that if I maintained the expediency or warrantableness of War, *offen-*

*sive* or *defensive*, I must give up *the essentials* of Christianity. The Sermon on the Mount did the business; I could not get over it; and I rose from the table astonished at my own want of penetration during so many years, and after so many readings of that very Sermon. O, the blindness and blinding influence of Prejudice!

But, let not any reader suppose that these *unchristian* notions regarding War, are peculiar to the members of the Church of England; far from it: nearly all the christian denominations in Europe, teach and preach the *lawfulness* of War, the *justifiableness* of War on *christian principles*; nor have I ever heard or read of a Sect, whose Ministers have not, at some period, countenanced and abetted human-slaughter; and even at the present day, notwithstanding the light which has been diffused on this subject during the present century, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists, Wesleyans, Unitarians, and a long list of others, still teach and preach *the reconcilableness* of War with Christianity—though at reverse poles of the moral firmament, and for ever unapproachable. It is true, among the Sects just instanced, there are thousands of Members, who, in 1854, no longer *countenance* War, no longer attempt to defend it on *christian* principles, no longer admit its expediency under *any circumstances*; yet, such Members are ahead of their Ministers generally: for, within the last 5 years, I have been eye and ear witness to the Ministers of all these denominations propagating, from pulpits and platforms, the expediency, necessity, and religious duty, “of taking up arms against our enemies”—the Society of Friends alone, expelling from their body such members, as do not, and will not, carry out the christian principle of *Non-resistance*. I am not a Quaker, I never was, never shall be a Quaker; yet, from my intercourse with them, I know them to be the best *educated*, the most *intelligent*, and, as it respects War, the truest *christian* Sect I ever met with. Let the editors of *The Times* and *John Bull* and *Punch*, hold up JOSEPH STURGE and ROBERT CHARLETON, and HENRY PEASE to public ridicule, if they please; I shall ever respect and honor them for their *moral courage* and *christian duty* in going to Russia, at an enormous personal sacrifice, to plead the cause of Humanity! and, rely upon it, my readers, though we of this generation, may misconceive and misconstrue

their humane object and christian conduct, in this particular instance, they not only *have* their reward, but, posterity *shall* do them justice.

I have, however, one charge to bring against the Society of Friends—a charge to which I expect most of their Members will plead—*Guilty*.

In their speeches at public meetings, in their writings, on their placards, and the handbills which they circulate, they brand Warriors and Executioners—*murderers*; they stigmatize our brave troops (containing many good, worthy, excellent men) with the most degrading and repulsive epithet in the language: this is an act, and a very offensive act of *moral injustice*; and it is a reproach to the whole body of Friends, that their members should publish to the world such flagrant untruths, such scandalous aspersions—for, though *killers of men*, MURDERERS THEY ARE NOT; and whoever stamps State-executioners (whether on the Scaffold, in the Field, or on the Waters) *murderers*, are either guilty of opprobrious calumny, or, grossly ignorant of the true English meaning of the word.

I am aware, that it has long been customary with the enthusiastic Friends of Peace, of many denominations, to call Soldiers *murderers*; the very pillars of our State-church, have been guilty of this abuse: Archbishop Secker, Bishop Porteus, and other dignitaries of Mother-church, have, again and again, branded Man-slaughterers *murderers*, telling us—

One MURDER made a Villain;

Millions, a Hero!

—but, I expect more appropriate language from Quakers than from Bishops, and trust this REPETITION of my accusation may no longer continue unheeded.

I cannot for a moment suppose that such amiable men as Sir Philip Sidney, Colonel Gardiner, General Washington, Lord Hill, and many others, would have remained in the army, much less would they have urged their followers on to *mortal combat*, had they considered Man-killing in the light of *murder*; nor would such devout and exemplary characters as Doddridge, Watts, Wesley, Whitefield, Robert Hall, Channing, and many other pious ministers, have countenanced and abetted War, had it appeared to them in that heinous light in which it now appears to thousands and tens of thousands of their followers: I believe they acted according to the Light they had; that not One of them

would have attempted to palliate, much less promote, the horrors and enormities and monstrosities of War, had they been blessed with the additional Light which is now beaming on the present generation. To me, it is as palpable as is the sun when in his meridian glory, that

Man is a *progressive* being,  
requiring a *progressive* Religion ;

that Christianity itself is a *growing* light—a light which shall continue shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Reason tells us, that Christianity must be expounded by every age for itself. We learn, from the New testament, that Christianity was much better understood after Christ's crucifixion, than during his sojourn among his disciples; and I venture to add, it is better understood now, than at any former period, and that mankind shall go on, perceiving more and more Light, untill *all darkness* shall be expelled the human mind.

Still, the *facts* of the past remain unchanged, unchangeable; and the histories of nations, corroborated by the histories of the churches, *prove*, plainly and irrefragably, that in all ages and in all lands, *Teachers of Religion* have been the chief instigators and abettors of War. Let us, then, my humane readers, fervently join in that happily expressed portion of our Church Litany —

That it may please Thee to *illuminate* all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with *true* knowledge and understanding of thy word; and that both by their *preaching* and *living*, they may set it forth, and show it accordingly!

In his Richard II. Shakespeare has graphically depicted the atrocity of making *a nation bleed* that a subject may be avenged. A crown is to be played for, and play they will, although Tumultuous wars

Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound.

In Cymbeline, the dramatist has informed us how warlike services are estimated:

*Belarius.*

The toil of the war,

## A pain that only seems to seek out danger

I' the name of *fame* and *honor*: which dies i' the  
[search;

And hath, as oft, a sland'rous epitaph



As record of fair act — nay, many times,  
 Doth ill deserve by doing well; what's worse,  
 Must court'sy at the censure — O, boys, this story  
 The world may read in me! &c.

In Hamlet, our matchless dramatist has given us the *philosophy of war*, in 3 lines — but, I cannot refrain from copying the previous dialogue between the Captain of the troops and the young Prince —

*Hamlet.* Good sir, whose powers are these?

*Captain.* They are of Norway, sir.

*Ham.* How propos'd, sir,  
 I pray you?

*Cap.* Against some part of Poland.

*Ham.* Who  
 Commands them, sir?

*Cap.* The Nephew of old Norway — Fortinbras.

*Ham.* Goes it against the main of Poland, sir?

Or, for some frontier?

*Cap.* Truly\* to speak, and with no addition, [\*true  
 We go to gain a little patch of ground [true-ly  
 That hath in it no profit but *the name*.  
 To pay five ducats — Five! I would not farm it;  
 Nor will it yield to Norway, or, the Pole;  
 A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

*Ham.* Why, then, the Polock never will defend it.

*Cap.* Yes; 'tis already garrisoned.

*Ham.* Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats,  
 Will not debate\* the question of this straw: [\*settle  
 This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,  
 That inward breaks, and shows no cause without,  
 Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.


*Cap.* God be wi' you, sir. [*Exit Captain*

*Hamlet alone.* What is a Man

If his chief good, and market of his time,  
 Be but to sleep and feed? a Beast; no more.  
 Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,  
 Looking *before* and *after*,\* gave us not [\*behind  
 That capability and godlike reason  
 To fust in us unused.

I do not know

Why yet I live to say — *This thing's to Do*;  
 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means,  
 To do't. Examples, gross as earth, exhort me:

Witness, this army of such mass and charge,  
 Led by a delicate and tender prince;  
 Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,  
 Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
 Exposing what is mortal, and unsure,  
 To all that fortune, death, and danger, dare,  
 E'en for an egg-shell.  Rightly to be great,  
 Is — not to stir without great argument,  
 But, greatly to find quarrel in a Straw,  
 When *honor's* at the stake!

But, alas! my readers, the histories of nations inform us, that the *honor* of Princes and Rulers, is, too oft, what Syphax describes it —

A fine imaginary notion,  
 That draws in raw and inexperienced men  
 To real mischiefs, while they hunt a shadow!

nor can we argue from the history of Great Britain, nor from any other country I have read of, that

Honor's a *sacred tie*, the law of kings,  
 That aids and strengthens Virtue where it meets her,  
 And imitates her actions where she is not; *Cato.*

for, we all know, that a *King's oath of honor*, and the *honor of a Holy-alliance*, have, in our day, proved equally frail, false, and contemptible. Men of Honor are the glory of their kind, ornaments to society, a blessing to their day and generation; while "Honorable men" are very equivocal beings: and Boileau informs us, they are everywhere the same —

By land or sea,  
*Honor* you'll find the universal plea.  
 The Cit, who cheats behind the counter-board,  
 Pretends as much to *honor*, as My Lord. *Satire XI.*

So true is it, that Potentates may make men "Honorable," and even "Right Honorable," but, they cannot make a *Man of Honor* — just as they can make men "Great," though *Great Men* make themselves:

Honor and Shame from no condition rise;  
 Act well your part — there all the *honor* lies!  
 Fortune in men has some small difference made;  
 One flaunts in rags, one flutters in brocade:  
 The Cobbler *aproned*, and the Parson *gowned*,  
 The Friar *hooded*, and the Monarch *crowned*.

"What differ more," you cry, "than crown and cowl?"  
I'll tell you friend — a *wise man* and a *fool*.

You'll find if once the Monarch act the Monk,

Or, Cobbler-like, the Parson will get drunk,

*Worth* makes the Man, and *want of it* the Fellow —

The rest is all mere *leather* or *prunella* ! POPE.

There is more philosophy in Falstaff's soliloquy on Honor, than many casual readers have discovered —

Well, 'tis no matter; Honor pricks me on. Yea, but how, if Honor prick me off, when I come on? how then? Can Honor set a leg? No. Or, an arm? No. Or, take away the grief of a wound? No. Honor hath no skill in surgery, then? No. What is Honor? A word. What is that word Honor? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. Is it insensible, then? Yea, to the dead. But, will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not suffer it — therefore, I'll none of it! Honor is a mere scutcheon; and so ends my catechism.

*First Part of Henry IV.*

Shakespeare has taken care to show us the paltry disputes which have given rise to Wars; and he has exhibited the instigators and abettors of War, in their true and odious lights, regardless of their high birth or exalted station — a species of moral bravery in the Dramatist, effected with impunity scarcely to be conceived possible, when we reflect on the persecuting age of the bigoted Elizabeth; for, whatever Protestants may have to lay to the charge of *Bloody Mary*, as she is very piously called, because, during her 5 years reign, she religiously roasted 277 human beings at the stake; Romanists can retort the opprobrium, proving by historical records, that the *Good Queen Bess*, as we Protestants stupidly style her, not only executed 168 persons "for being priests, for harboring priests, or, for being converts" (hanging, emboweling them alive, and quartering them) but, in addition to all these barbarities, upwards of 62,000 of her "well-beloved subjects," were, by her parental orders, graciously suspended from the gallows! which was only 10,000 short of her worthy Father's offerings on the altar of prejudice — that notorious "Defender of the Faith."

In the opening Chorus to Henry V, Shakespeare has

furnished us with one of the most striking images of War, to be found in the whole range of our literature —

O, for a Muse of fire, that would ascend  
The brightest heaven of invention!  
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,  
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!  
Then, should the warlike Harry, like himself,  
Assume the port of Mars; and, *at his heels*,  
Leashed in like hounds, should *famine, sword, and fire*,  
Crouch for employment!

Such, indeed, are the destructive concomitants of War — *famine, sword, and fire*. Desolated countries, sacked cities, burning dwellings, violated innocence, widowed and orphanage, with all their heart-rending associations, I shall not attempt to describe: I leave to the Vulture to scent out the putrescence, to the Hyena to track the imprints of blood, to the Soldiery to satiate their appetites on helpless victims, to the Clergy to offer up thanksgivings for the thousands slain, while I beseech every humane reader to unite with me in ejaculating, in the words of the Psalmist —

Lord, scatter thou the people that delight in War!

Shakespeare was not less careful to point out the advantages of Peace, than to depict the horrors of War; and though the Dramatist has given us a *fighting-minded* Archbishop of Canterbury, he has given us a *peaceful-minded* Archbishop of York, who tells us —

A Peace is of the nature of *a conquest*;  
For then, both parties nobly are subdued,  
And neither party loser.

On this subject much may be said in few words:

If Christianity be *not* a cunningly devised fable — if doing unto others as we would that they (in similar circumstances) should do unto us, be the essence of morality — if the thousand published reports of feats of broils and battles, be not arrant lies — then, is War the most direful evil that ever afflicted this nether world! an evil to be thwarted by all who have any feeling of *humanity*, to be deprecated by all who have any sense of *morality*, to be eschewed by all who profess to be followers of the *Prince of Peace*! Intemperance is deplorable, Slavery is calamitous, but War is horrible! for, War is a *legionary* evil, concentrating within itself all the capital enormities perpetrated by Man — trampling under foot every divine command, extirpating every

humane feeling, creating a hell upon earth — spreading envy, hatred, and malice, affliction, misery, and death, from sea to sea and shore to shore — engendering, producing, and nurturing such heinous monstrosities, as not only strike the angels of light with appalling astonishment, but rivet the spirits of darkness in silent admiration!

Let, however, but a dozen such "Peace Congresses" take place in the principal cities of the world, as 1851 witnessed in Hyde Park, and War, with all its direful, demoralizing, and destructive concomitants, will pass into oblivion, to moulder among the barbarisms and barbarities of "Things that Were." The world needs it, millions desire it, the gospel demands it, and prophecy declares it shall be accomplished —

No more shall nation against nation rise,  
Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,  
Nor fields with gleaming steel be covered o'er;  
The brazen trumpet kindle rage no more:  
But, useless lances into sythes\* shall bend,      [\*sithe  
And the broad falchion in a ploughshare end!      POPE.

Shakespeare made Henry V as much a *warrior*, as he made Falstaff a *braggart*, Richard a *villain*, Hamlet a *philosopher*, or, Ariel a *spirit*; but how any man of mere ordinary penetration, after reading our Dramatist for himself, could fancy that "Shakespeare was fond of War," I cannot conceive! With equal show of justice, we might argue, that Shakespeare was himself the abortion Caliban, the consummate villain Iago, the ghost of the majesty of Denmark, or any other masterly-drawn character, as to suppose, "from his masterly representation of Henry, that Shakespeare was fond of War." According to Falstaff, our dramatist made Justice Shallow, "after supper, of a cheese-paring;" and Shakespeare has really made Henry out of manly virtues grossly perverted.

Had the world looked upon heroism with Shakespeare's eyes, the renown of an Achilles would not have been the inspiration of an Alexander, that of an Alexander having descended upon a Cæsar [no such diphthongs in English] nor the success of a Cesar have been the stimulus to the ambition of a Napoleon. All this would have been long before brought to an end. The world would have known to what *idol* they were paying their homage — they would have ceased to be-

come parties to the continuance of their own misery — they would have ceased to become the aids and helps to the desolation of their own homes — they would have ceased to be the rewarders of their own *pests* and *nuisances*, and the proferers of honors and homage to those from whom they and their children reaped nothing, and could reap nothing — save disappointments, misfortunes, and calamities.

*Lectures to the Working Classes; by Rev. W. J. Fox.*

Notwithstanding the Poet of Humanity so emphatically denounced War, and so repeatedly recommended the morality of the New in preference to the morality of the Old testament; notwithstanding his dramas are replete with moral lessons, philosophical axioms, and philanthropic sentiments; *but few* (comparatively) of his Readers, Editors, Commentators, or Critics, seem to have observed the truthfulness of his humane and lofty principles — the re-issue of those long neglected precepts, proclaimed upwards of 1800 years ago, by him who spake as never man spake.

Those of my considerate readers, who see with their own eyes, hear with their own ears, and understand with their own hearts, can appreciate Shakespeare's patriotic apostrophe to his native country, when he exclaims —

O England! model to thy inward greatness,  
Like little body with a mighty heart,  
What *might'st* thou do, that honor *would* thee do,  
Were all thy Children *kind and natural*!

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## CHAPTER XI.

*Dueling — Slavery — Usury — Persecution —  
Temperance.*

The *Point of Honor* has been deemed of use,  
To teach good-manners, and to curb abuse:  
Admit it true, the consequence is clear —  
Our polished-manners are a *mask* we wear,  
And, at the bottom, barbarous still, and rude;  
We are *restrained*, indeed, but not subdued.

Perhaps, at last, close scrutiny may show  
The practice *dastardly* and *mean* and *low*;  
That men engage in it compelled by force,  
And *fear*, not courage, is its proper source —  
The fear of tyrant Custom, and the fear  
Lest fops should censure us, and fools should sneer.  
At least, to trample on our Maker's laws,  
And hazard\* life for any, or, no cause; [*\*better hazzard*  
To rush into a fixed, eternal state,  
Out of the very flames of rage and hate,  
Or send another shivering to the Bar  
With all the guilt of such unnatural war,  
Whatever *use* may urge, or *honor* plead,  
On reason's verdict — is a Madman's deed.

Am I to set my life upon a throw,  
Because a Bear is rude and surly? No!

A moral, sensible, and well-bred man,

*Will not* affront me — and no other *can*. COWPER.

The cowardly vice of "Dueling [not *duelling*] with Small-swords," was introduced into England while our great moral Teacher was busy writing for the Stage; and he instantly put his *brand* of condemnation upon it, notwithstanding the dastardly crime was held in high repute by men in power.

In his *Timon of Athens*, after Alcibiades has begged the life of a friend, who had slain his antagonist in a Duel, Shakespeare makes the First Senator of Athens reply to the General's request —

You undergo too strict a paradox,

Striving to make *an ugly deed* look fair:

Your words have took such pains, as if they labored  
 To bring Manslaughter into form, and set quarreling  
 Upon the head of valor; which, indeed,  
 Is valor misbegot, and came into the world  
 When sects and factions\* were newly born: [3 syllables  
*He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer*  
*The worst that man can breathe;*  
 If wrongs be *evils*, and enforce us *kill*,  
 What folly 'tis to *hazzard life* for ill?

*Alcibiades.* My lord —

1 *Senator.* You cannot make gross sins look clear;  
 To *rèvenge* is no valor — but, *to bear*.

Such was the morality enforced by the philanthropic  
 Father of the English Drama; such his fearlessly published  
 opinion of the vice of Dueling 250 years ago — upwards of  
 two centuries before it fell under the ban of *public-opinion*  
 in England: for, though such noble-minded men as Sir  
 Walter Raleigh, the spirited Marquess de Renty, the intrepid  
 Viscount de Turenne, and similar magnanimously-minded  
 characters, thought it beneath their dignity, unbecoming  
 their manliness, to fight a Duel; others, of less *moral cou-*  
*rage*, though of equal rank — such as the unlamented  
 Castlereagh, the intemperate O'Connell, the Iron Duke,  
 proved too weak to bid defiance to the sneers of Slaves to  
 an ignoble, an unmanly Custom — a custom so ungentle-  
 manly and disgraceful, that it has, of late years, been made  
 illegal, and principals and accomplices rendered amenable  
 to the Laws of the land we live in — Better late, than never.

*Rashness* is one thing, *Courage* another; there's many  
 a man foolhardy enough to seek —

#### The bubble Reputation

Even in the cannon's mouth,  
 whose courage would sink into his shoes, while treading,  
 in the still hour of night, a solitary churchyard path —

'Midst skulls and coffins, epitaphs and worms;  
 Where light-heeled Ghosts, and visionary shades,  
 Beneath the wan cold moon (as fame reports)

Embodied thick, perform their mystic rounds. BLAIR.  
 There's many a Conquering-hero, who dares not review, in  
 his own chamber, the applauded deeds which he has done.

Brave conquerors — for, so you are,  
 That war against your own affections,  
 And the huge army of the world's desires! *L. L. Lost.*



And, thinking reader, that man cannot be praised for his penetration, who does not see in the extinction of Dueling, the approaching extinction of War — designated by Shakespeare, the *Son of Hell*; who does not perceive, that, in our day, all things are converging towards universal Peace. There is not a more striking proof of Europe's rapid advancement towards Civilisation during the last 40 years, than the present general reluctance, the present difficulty to enter into a general War; and he who cannot see that Human-progress has been greater within the last 50, than during the 500 preceding years, is not to be envied for his passing through the world without observing its moral and political revolutions; neither is he entitled to be held up to our admiration, as an example of a discerning mind. Happily, England is not the last among the nations, to discover the blessings of Peace and the evils of War; though, certainly, *the most aggressive nation* on the face of the earth. See p. 134.

That island of England breeds very valiant creatures; their mastiffs are of unmatchable courage — and the men do sympathize with the mastiffs, in robustious and rough coming-on, leaving their wits with their wives: and then, give them great meals of beef, and iron, and steel, they will eat like wolves, and fight like devils.

*King Henry V.*

Within my time, two individuals, William Pitt, and Napoleon Buonaparte — now

“Damned to everlasting Fame,”

sacrificed millions and millions of human beings, on the altar of their ambition; and by their deceptive and enchanting cries of *Liberty* on the one side, and *Glory* on the other, they fascinated *unthinking* multitudes to echo their cries, till all Europe was befooled and maddened into inhuman excesses. Well might Burns exclaim, on contemplating such waste of property and destruction of life —

Man's *inhumanity* to Man,

Makes countless thousands mourn!

Half a century back, our Statesmen were so accustomed to talk, and write, and dream of War, Battles, and Bloodshed, that all their modes of thought and many of their rules of conduct, were what Shakespeare would have called — *incarnadined*.

On 30 May, 1794, Lord Abingdon said, in his place in Parliament — The best road to Peace, my lords, *is War*; and War carried on in the same manner in which we are taught to worship our Creator — namely, with all our Souls, with all our Minds, with all our Hearts, and with all our Strength!

Observe now, the difference of sentiment proclaimed in that House, half a century afterwards, when, on 17 March, 1846, the Earl of Aberdeen said, in reply to the Earl of Clarendon (on the Oregon negotiations) He may depend on it, that believing, as I do, that War is the greatest *calamity* that can befall a nation, and thinking also that it is generally the greatest *crime* a nation can commit, He may rely on it, that every effort to avert this national calamity, shall be employed!

And, on the 31 of January last, we find the Earl's confirmation of these sentiments, when speaking as Premier, on the opening of Parliament —

My lords, the noble Earl (Derby) has thought proper to say, that the Emperor of Russia has good reason to complain of the Government; and he (Derby) has specially directed his observation to me, and has said, that my *known reluctance* to engage in a War, and the declarations which I have made upon that subject, were such as to mislead him (the Emperor) and to make him feel that I could never be a party to engaging in hostilities against him. My lords, *I am ready to repeat all the declarations I have ever made*, against this country engaging in a War against *any* State, and certainly against Russia. This Country has not unfrequently engaged in War in haste, and repeated it at leisure. [*Cheers*] I consider it to be *my duty* and *the duty of the Government*, not to say, that under *all* circumstances, we will *never* engage in a War, but, to use every possible effort to check a feeling which, I admit is *natural*. In the present instance, that popular feeling is one of indignation against what appears aggression and injustice; but still, it is *the duty of the Government* to endeavor to *restrain* within bounds, those indignant feelings which are perfectly natural.

*The Times.* 1 Feb. 1854.

To show the rapid progress of *Peace-principles* among our Legislators, since the general Peace of 1815, I might quote scores of their speeches, both in and out of Parliament, in unison with the sentiments of England's greatest living benefactor — BROUGHAM —

I abominate War as *unchristian*! I hold it the greatest of *human-crimes*! I deem it to involve all others — violence, blood, rapine, fraud; everything that can deform the character, alter the nature, and debase the name of Man!

And, notwithstanding the present War between Russia and Turkey, notwithstanding all the rumors of Wars, the issue will be Peace! for, it is not in the power of Governments, though backed by standing Armies and aided by the Sophistries and influences of Kingcraft and Priestcraft, to extinguish that light which has arisen on mankind during the last 40 years of comparative Peace.

It is, however, a sad reflection, that the professed Ministers of the Prince of Peace, long have been and still are, the most zealous as well as the most influential abettors of War — With you, lord Bishop,

It is even so — O, who shall believe,  
But you misuse the reverence of your place;  
Employ the countenance and grace of heaven,  
As a false favorite doth his prince's name,  
In deeds dishonorable? You have taken up,  
Under the counterfeited-zeal of God,  
The subjects of his substitute, my father;  
And, both against the peace of heaven and him,  
Have here up-swarmed them. 2 P. of *Henry IV.*

Armies would soon fall away, were they not supported by the sophistries of Pulpits. Of the political Sermons preached before the Assembly of Divines and the House of Commons, South, one of the brightest ornaments of our State-church, observes, in his usual mild manner —

Read the collection of sermons upon their *bloody thanksgivings* and their *bloodthirsty humiliations*, and on other occasions before the two Houses; I say, let any one read that collection — or, to speak more properly, *magazine* of sermons, and then, let him confess that it was *the sword of the tongue* that first unsheathed the other. *Sermon on Jeremiah, XV. 20.*

—and, should we enter into actual war against Russia, professed Ministers of the Prince of Peace, will not scruple, even in these “more enlightened days,” to propose, and possibly to carry out, *Days of Humiliation* and *Days of Thanksgiving* — so called. Let however those civilizing and humanizing instruments — Steamboats, Railroads, and Telegraphs, but progress for a quarter of a century, proportionally as they have hitherto progressed, and War will be *impracticable* in Europe. I am the child of Hope and Expectation —

I see *the dawn* of that Golden-age  
Which bards have sung with deep regret;  
It stands as *past*, in History's page —  
But I perceive it is *coming* yet:  
The Iron-age, I allow, *is done*;  
But, the Golden-age is *yet to come*!

It was in Shakespeare's day, that Sir John Hawkins acquired the infamous distinction of being *the first* Englishman who trafficked in Human flesh and blood and bones; the notorious founder of Negro Slavery in the British possessions in America; a man still held in execration, as having been a *Special enemy to Mankind* — for, christian reader, whatever Statesmen may urge in palliation, whatever Pulpit-orators may adduce from barbarous Jewish customs, in exculpation of the monstrosity, it cannot be denied, that —

The Slavetrade had attained to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated Wickedness; and, scorning all competition and comparison, it stood, without a rival, in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable pre-eminence! *Sir WILLIAM DOLBEN.*

Yet, no sooner was the monstrosity perpetrated, than the singularly singular Dramatist, the stanch Friend of Humanity, the fearless Philanthropist, Shakespeare, stamped it with his *condemnatory mark*; and, though carried on by Sir John's “powerful and worshipful” friends in London, our Dramatist, to give tenfold effect to his condemnation, reproached the nominal Christians of his age, through the lips of a Jew —

You have among you many a *purchased* Slave,  
Which, like your asses, and your dogs, and mules,  
You use in soject and in slavish parts,  
*Because you bought them*: shall I say to you,

Let them be free ; marry them to your heirs ?  
 Why sweat they under burthens ? let their beds  
 Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates  
 Be seasoned with such viands ? You will answer,  
*The Slaves are ours* — So do I answer you.

*Merchant of Venice.*

It was not by accident, but, of set purpose, that our Philanthropist opened 2nd Act of the drama with the lines given to the Prince of Morocco —

*Mislike me not for my complexion ;*

The shadowed livery of the burnished sun,

To whom I am a neighbour, and near bred :

it was for the express purpose (I conceive) of inculcating a moral lesson, through that most womanly of all his females, Portia, in her reply to the *Black Prince* —

But, if my father had not scanted\* me, [*\*limited*

And hedged me by his wit,\* to yield myself [*\*wisdom*

*His* wife who wins me, by that means I told you,

Yourself renown'd Prince, then stood *as fair*

As any comer I have looked on yet,

For my affection.

Shakespeare's humaneness would not admit of a *white* man assuming authority over a *black* man; he considered them equally entitled to all the rights and privileges of humanity, and rejected, with becoming indignation, the rating of a man's feelings, by the color of his skin: he makes his *black Prince* say to Portia —

Bring me the fairest creature northward born,

Where Phœbus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,

And let us make incision for your love,

To prove whose blood is *reddest*, his or mine.

Shakespeare has repeatedly inculcated the doctrine of *universal brotherhood*, though, often overlooked by his readers —

Strange is it, that our bloods,

Of color, weight, and heat, poured altogether,

Would quite confound *distinction*, yet stand off

In differences so mighty.

*All's Well &c.*

Happily, though the traffic in Human-beings was established by *christian* London Merchants in Shakespeare's day, in our day Slavery has been abolished throughout the British dominions — another striking proof of the Progress of this age *towards* Civilisation — for, in this immense Empire (more than twice as large as the whole Continent

of Europe) containing above 8 millions of square miles and upwards of 250 millions of souls, there does not breathe a single Slave!

As to the outcry made at the present time about *White-slavery* (in contradistinction to the Slavery of the Blacks and Dark-colored tribes) it is the cry of Ignorance, and is echoed by those only who have never read, never thought of *the still worse* condition of our predecessors. With all our short-comings, abominations, and crimes, we live in a glorious age! an age of *progress* and of *promise*, which has already cast into the shade the stupidly bepraised "Golden-age of England" — the persecuting age of the bigoted [not *bigotted*] Elizabeth and James.

The truth is, gentle reader, *Civilisation is yet in its Infancy*. Though, as a people, the English have progressed wonderfully since the Elizabethan-age, yet, to denominate a selfish people a *civilized people*, or, a fighting nation a *civilized nation*, is sheer absurdity — pure ignorance of the right meaning or appropriate use of words. If we speak *comparatively*, then, on the scale of comparison, the English of 1854 may allowably be termed *civilized*, as contrasted to our more barbarous predecessors in the time of Alfred, John, or Elizabeth; still, as a people, we are but progressing *towards* Civilisation: however far we may have receded from Barbarism, the distance between our present advanced condition and Civilisation, is immeasurably farther! Would you, gentle reader, dispute this? then, I should infer, that you have never *examined* the subject, but blindly given credence to the pleasingly false representations of our "temporal rulers" and "spiritual guides," who talk so largely of our "religious liberty" and of this "enlightened nation" — to which Burchell would ejaculate — *fudge! fudge! fudge!* Had our Rulers during this 19th century, but passed Acts of Parliament for the building and endowment of Schools, Lecture-rooms, and Libraries, instead of erecting Churches, and Chapels, and Prisons like palaces, we should not, in 1854, have to boast of so many thousands of professional Thieves daily parading the streets of London; nor would Great Britain now have contained 5 millions of Adults who cannot *read* and 8 millions of Adults who cannot *write* their own names! But,

There's a Good-time coming, boys,  
 A good-time coming ;  
 Let us aid it all we can,  
 Every woman, every man,  
 The good-time coming :  
 Smallest helps, if rightly given,  
 Make the impulse stronger ;  
 'Twill be strong enough one day —  
 Wait a little longer !

MACKAY.

Cumberland, in his Preface to his play of *The Jew*, complained of other dramatists supplying mirth for the playgoers, by producing a Jew "to be baited through 5 long acts ;" but Cumberland, and several once admired Actors, very unfortunately, put a wrong construction on Shakespeare's representation of Shylock — a construction not warranted by the text of the *first* folio edition of his works, much less by his well-known liberality and humaneness. Mrs. Inchbald published it, as her opinion, that *Detestation of the Jew*, is the moral designed by the author ! but, rely upon it, my readers, it was *not* as a Jew, a Hebrew, that Shakespeare held Shylock up to the abhorrence of his auditors ; no such thing ! the noble-minded writer of the *Merchant of Venice*, was utterly incapable of anything so ungenerous and inhuman ; He was thoroughly aware, that God had made of *one* blood all nations of men ; He would not have opposed an Israelite's taking his seat as Member of our House of Commons after his having been chosen the *fitting* Representative of the christian City of London ; for, *persecution* was as foreign to his sentiments as his feelings ; and Actors have taken a delight in personating a character such as Shakespeare never penued. Read that text, gentle reader, for yourself ; and (if not blinded by prejudice) you will at once see, that Shakespeare's object was, to exhibit in his native colors, the *avaricious money-lender*, the *extorting usurer*, the *heartless creditor* — the representative of a too numerous class, still honored, in 1854, as "highly respectable," while inhumanly exacting 25, and 50, and even 80 per cent, from the honest but needy tradesman — such *Bloodsuckers* are not yet extinct in London ! many of whom are not of the Hebrew race. It was altogether alien to Shakespeare's object, as it was adverse from his nature, to pour contempt on that much injured tribe of the universal family of Man. Even in this very play, the dramatist has

put into the mouth of Shylock, some of the severest censures ever pronounced against the *unmanly* and *unchristian* persecutors of that shamefully ill-treated race, by nominal Christians —

Antonio hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? *I am a Jew!* Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food? hurt with the same weapons? subject to the same diseases? healed by the same means? warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and, if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? *Revenge!* If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be *by Christian example?* Why, *revenge!* The villainy *you teach me*, I will execute — and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

The “bitterness of Shylock’s expressions,” which have been so severely censured, are not only perfectly natural, but, in my judgement, transcendently exquisite; the true utterance of feelings ulcerated — ay, critical reader, feelings *ulcerated* by ill-usage. Shylock, the Jew, the contemned Jew, despised by nominal Christians, who profess to believe in Christ, the great Founder of Christianity, the Jew Jesus Christ — that Shylock, is one of the inimitable masterpieces of characterisation, which none but Shakespeare could have so presented to our admiration and study; and if we have any capabilities of grasping the Shakespearean delineation of Shylock, we Christians must be constrained to take shame to ourselves, for our *unchristianized* and infamous conduct towards that much injured race, from whom we have received not only the Scriptures, but the very Messiah in whom we profess to believe — whom we call our *Redeemer*, our *Lord*, and our *God!* What man in his senses, witnessing, as I have repeatedly witnessed, the unmanly, the inhuman conduct of professed Christians towards Jews, would give a rush for their Christianity? The persecutions



of the Jews by mere nominal Christians, have made the very stones to cry out — *Revenge!* the darkest, blackest, most damn'd spots in English History, are the records of our *christian* persecutions and robberies and massacres of Jews. Out upon such professions and professors of Christianity!

Our philanthropic Dramatist has shown us, that Shylock's accusations against the Christians were not exaggerated, but acknowledged by his enemies —

*Antonio.* Well, Shylock, shall we be beholden to you?

*Shylock.* Signor Antonio, many a time — and oft

In the Rialto, you have rated me

About my moneys,\* and my usances; [never *monies*

Still have I borne it with a patient shrug —

For *suff'rance* is the badge of all our tribe:

You call me *misbeliever, cut-throat dog,*

And spet upon my Jewish gaberdine;

And all, for use of that which *is mine own.*

Well then, it now appears you need my help;

Go to then: you come to me, and you say —

Shylock, we would have moneys — You say so;

You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,

And foot me, as you spurn a stranger cur

Over your threshold; Moneys is your suit:

What should I say to you? Should I not say,

Hath a dog money? Is it possible

A cur can lend three thousand ducats? or,

Shall I bend low, and, in a bondman's key,

With 'bated breath, and whispering humbleness,

Say this —

Fair sir, You spet on me, on We'n'sday last;

You spurned me, such a day; another time

You called me *dog*; and, for these courtesies,

I'll lend you this much moneys?

*Antonio.* I am as like to call thee so again,

To spet on thee again, to spurn thee too.

But (I fear) few of the readers of this instructive drama have noted the admirable *moral* which the Dramatist has developped [not *developped*] in it, illustrative of one of his own axioms —

Swcet are the uses of Adversity!

for, we find Antonio's *spirit* changed, in the change of his circumstances and trying situation; and he becomes a wiser

and a better man, than when he *spet* on Shylock, *spurned* him, and called him *dog*.

In this drama Shakespeare has put forth his strength; therefore, give it an attentive reading; try how many beauties and excelences you can discover in it — there are many — and don't encumber yourself with the notions and critiques of his commentators and critics. The Merchant of Venice "is worth a Jew's eye."

Shakespeare's attack upon Usurers — a harpy brood, preying on society, even under the protection of the Law, was not in anywise restricted to Jews, the Money-lenders by profession in most lands; our indignant dramatist has unceremoniously reproached the inordinate Usurers of all stamps, as may be seen in Timon of Athens, and other plays.

I can assure my readers, that Shakespeare has been *misconceived*, whenever he has been considered a favorer of *any species of persecution*, as the abetter of any sect or party; his beneficence is as extensive as humanity itself, and his charitableness without bounds.

None, but Shakespeare, *dared* to stand forth the indomitable champion of *religious freedom* and *the right of private judgement* in those "red-hot days of religious persecutions." In the very face of Elizabeth's burning Francis Kett, at Norwich, "for heresy" — regardless of her burning two Dutchmen, in Smithfield-market, "for being Anabaptists," Shakespeare heroically proclaimed his opinion of such fanatical and infernal exhibitions; for, when Leontes says —

I'll have thee burned!

the courageous reply the dramatist issues out of Paulina's lips is a truth which no one else had the manliness to publish —

*Leontes*. I'll have thee burned!

*Paulina*.

I care not;

It is a Heretic that *makes* the fire,

Not she which burns in't!

*Winter's Tale*.

Duely to estimate Shakespeare's moral intrepidity, in penning his unscrupulous censures upon *all* Persecutions for *religious opinions*, upon *usury*, *slavery*, *dueling*, *war*, and all other notorious evils of that Sinful (not Golden) age, I should require a volume, *first* to exhibit the moral, the political, and the intellectual condition of the nation; then; to instance a variety of cases, during Shakespeare's author-

ship, which had been punished with *imprisonment*, or *laceration*, or *death*, all of them insignificant, when contrasted to the spirited condemnations, bold reproaches, and bitter sarcasms, contained in his imperishable—to us of 1854, but partially known Dramas.

Despite the vigilance with which all sorts of publications were watched, after the notorious execution of Mary Queen of Scots, the fearless Shakespeare hesitated not to tell his Patroness—the bigoted persecuter of Atheists, Romanists, Dissentients, and many Lovers of truth and justice and freedom—

He that steeps his safety in true blood,  
Shall find but bloody safety and untrue !]

and, lest this reproof might escape the ear of Elizabeth, the dramatist inserted, in the following Act,

There is no sure foundation set in blood ;

No certain life achieved by others' death. *King John*.

But, I must cease quoting, and leave my readers to seek for the corroborations and proofs of my assertions, in the writings of the Poet of Humanity—they abound in his works. The quotations I have given, may, I trust, lead many to *study* him for themselves. Divest your minds, my inquiring readers, as much as possible, of the influence of Prejudice ; consult his critics less and himself more ;

For, on the lip of his subduing tongue,  
All kinds of arguements and questions deep ;  
All replications prompt, and reasons strong,  
For his advantage still did wake and sleep,  
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep.

#### *The Lover's Complaint*

Shakespeare is a *Text-book* to all classes of public speakers, and may be quoted with as much aptness in the Pulpit as on the Platform. I wish the TEETOTALERS would read him ; He would teach them *temperance* ; a quality not very common among that Body—at least as far as I am able to judge. It has been my lot to be present at about a dozen of their meetings, and a more *intemperate* set of Speakers I never heard, than the Temperance advocates—not excepting their *great-guns* in Exeter Hall—to whom Gough is certainly an honorable exception ; for Gough, besides being entitled to the appellation of “a natural Orator,” with whom all classes of hearers cannot fail to be pleased, is a *temperate, rational, reasonable*

Teetotaler ; a character very unlike most of the *intemperate* Lecturers I have heard on Temperance and Teetotalism. I suppose Shakespeare is out of their reach, either above or below them ; I never heard him quoted ; they know him not, or, He would ornament many of their discourses and furnish them with many a text. Apemantus says to Timon, of his wines and the custom of drinking healths —

Those healths will make thee and thy state, look ill.

Here's that which is too weak to be a sinner —

*Honest Water, which ne'er left man i' the mire :*

a capital Text for a Teetotaler's lecture ! In 3rd Scene of 2nd Act of *As You Like It*, Adam says to his young master —

I have five hundred crowns,

The thrifty hire I saved under your father,

Which I did store, to be my foster-nurse,

When service should in my old limbs lie lame,

And unregarded age in corners thrown ;

Take that : and He that doth the ravens feed,

Yea, providentially caters for the sparrow,

Be comfort to my age ! Here is the gold ;

All this I give you.  Let me be your servant !

Though I look old, yet, I am strong and lusty ;

For, *in my youth I never did apply*

*Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood ;*

Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo

The means of weakness and debility :

Therefore, my age is as a lusty winter,

Frosty, but kindly ; let me go with you,

I'll do the service of a younger man

In all your business and necessities.

Othello there are many texts—

*Iago*. Come, lieutenant, I have a stoop of wine ; and here without are a brace of Cyprus gallants, that would fain have a measure to the health of black Othello.

*Cassio*. Not tonight, good Iago ; I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking : I could well wish Courtesy would invent *some other custom* of entertainment.

It is to the custom of *drinking* and *reveling* Hamlet alludes, when he says to Horatio—

It is a custom

More honored in the breach, than the observance.

When Cassio re-enters, the dramatist fails not to reproach the English, as a people, for their excess in Drinking —

*Cassio.* 'Fore Heaven, they have given me a rouse already.

*Montano.* Good faith a little one; not past a pint, as I am a soldier.

*Iago.* Some wine, hoa! [*Iago then sings*]

And let me the canakin clink, clink,

And let me the canakin clink;

A Soldier's a Man;

O Man's life's but a span;

Why then, let the Soldier drink!

Some wine, boys! [*Wine is brought in*]

*Cassio* [*intoxicated*] 'Fore Heaven, an excelent song.

*Iago.* I learned it in England; where indeed they are most potent in potting: your Dane, your German, and your swag-bellied Hollander — Drink, hoa — are nothing to your English.

*Cassio.* Is your Englishman so exquisite\* in his drinking?

[\* *expert*, so *clever*, such an *adept*]

*Iago.* Why, he drinks you, with facility, your Dane dead drunk; he sweats not to overthrow your Almain [*German*] he gives your Hollander a vomit, ere the next pottle can be filled.

And the dramatist has given us a specimen of what an Englishman can do, in the way of Drinking, in his inimitable Falstaff. Afterwards, when Cassio has come again to his senses, he says —

Drunk? and speak parrot? and squabble? swagger? swear? and discourse fustian with one's own shadow?

*O, thou invisible Spirit of wine*, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee *Devil*!

*Iago.* What was He that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you?

*Cassio.* I know not.

*Iago.* Is't possible!

*Cassio.* I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly; a quarrel, but, nothing wherefore. *O, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!* that we should, with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause, *transform ourselves into beasts!*

To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange — every inordinate cup is unblessed, and the ingredient is a *Devil*!

Our but partially known Moral-philosopher and Philanthropic-dramatist, has embraced many opportunities of ex-

posing the vice of Drunkenness and the degraded state of Drunkards; he even makes his Fools instruments of reproach; as in the *Twelfth Night* —

*Olivia.* What's a drunken-man like, fool?

*Clown.* Like a drowned man, a fool, and a madman; one draught above heat, makes him a fool; the second mads him; and a third drowns him.

The English vice of Drunkenness I can hardly reckon among the proofs of our Civilisation, as a people; yet, in 1854, excess in drinking is more prevalent among the *higher* than the *middle* classes; more excessive, beastly, and fatal still, among the *lower* and the *lowest* classes: how is it to be eradicated? The general cry among Philanthropists, is—*Educate, Educate, Educate!* But, my readers, *Education* (in the general acceptation of the word) won't do it; our higher classes *are* Educated, yet, still they Drink. It is not the educating of the *intellectual* faculties alone, that can eradicate the evil; there must be *moral* education; and what, in the name of Humanity, is *the moral education* of England, even in this “enlightened” day? And who is to improve our *moral* education? The *lower* classes are incapable, while the *higher* classes are insensible of the necessity; but, the *middle* classes are both aware of the lack of *moral education* and in a position to supply it — and they will supply it! Government *won't do it* and the Church *can't do it* — the People of England must do it themselves, or, it never will be done!

Perhaps, it is not to the *immediate* interest of Government to take any measures in 1854, to stop or even to check the vice of Drunkenness; for, both *men* and *money* are wanted to carry on our present State-policy. We have before us, a contemplated War against Russia — and no one knows now, against what other powers: and how are *men* to be raised for such a purpose (to shoot at others or to be shot at) were Inebriation to be put down by the strong hand of the Law? I suspect the fanaticism of our Pulpit-orators would now fail to persuade their congregations to go out in requisite numbers. And whether we shall become actually engaged in War or not, the very Preparations for War must cost this country millions more than if our Government had determined to remain at Peace: 1854, therefore, is not “a convenient season” for putting down Drunkenness; because,

The Excise is fattened with the rich result  
 Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,  
 For ever dribbling out their base contents,  
 Touched by the Midas-finger of the State,  
 Bleed gold, for ministers to sport away.

*Drink, and be Mad*, then; 'tis your Country bids!  
 Gloriously Drunk obey the important call!  
 Her cause demands the assistance of your throats;  
 Ye all can swallow — and she asks no more.

COWPER.

What this country most needs, is the instant introduction of *rational amusements* among the laboring classes — not so much as a check to the vice of *intoxication*, as a preparation for the culture of *moral and mental* qualities from infancy upwards. Our population is degraded by “untoward circumstances;” our laboring classes know and feel they are not brute-beasts nor slaves; and if they had *rational amusements* provided for them, they would assuredly enjoy them; Temperance would soon occupy the place of Drunkenness; economy and thrift would naturally follow; and our Gin-palaces would speedily be forsaken, for our Museums, our Galleries of Art, and other places of *rational entertainment*. But, gentle reader, If you, or I, or any one else, should publicly propose to allure our degraded millions from *vice, riot, and intemperance*, by opening our Museums and Galleries on Sundays, there would be “the very devil to pay” among our pulpit gentry! for, *if the people won't go to hear them*, to receive instruction from them, they will do all that in them lies to prevent their receiving instruction from any other source whatever! If the people won't go to Heaven through Church and Chapel doors, why — let them be damned! let them continue to live more degraded than Brute-beasts, wallowing in filth and nastiness, overwhelmed in drunkenness, misery, and unqualified wretchedness! let them not be raised to the dignity of rational beings, but rather live and die the abject slaves of all species of Intemperance! Let them rot and die and be damned! So say the *actions* of our Pulpit-teachers — Heaven pardon them!

As a Moralist, a Philosopher, and a Philanthropist, Shakespeare's writings have exercised a powerfully beneficial influence on Humanity at large, from which it never can altogether backslide. Wherever the light of Civi-

lisation has penetrated, the refulgent and benignant radiance of Shakespeare's genius, is both seen and felt; and much of his *humane spirit* is now mingled with the utterance of the most intellectual minds of many nations—not merely in England, America, India, and the scattered Colonies wherein the tongue of Shakespeare is spoken, but, throughout Holland, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland—ay, even in Spain and Portugal, together with the regions of the Shah, the Sultan, and the Czar, the lofty *moral principles* and *fraternizing sentiments* of the Sweet Bard of Avon, are now spreading and elevating and humanizing the vast family of Man.

Fortunately for the human-race, the Dramas of Shakespeare find their way into nations and families, where the Bible is not admitted; and strange as my assertion may appear to some of my readers—there are more sayings and sentiments in harmony with Holy-writ, in the Plays of our great Dramatist, than in the writings of any other man; and Shakespeare's works are calculated to do more good, to produce more beneficial effects, to diffuse more of the *genuine spirit* of Christianity among men of foreign countries, than would a whole Library of our orthodox divinity—for, Shakespeare had not merely read his Bible *well*, but, he has saturated his Plays with the benign doctrines of the New testament. Religion, with Shakespeare, was a holy, and a spotless thing, notwithstanding the gross injustice which he witnessed done *in its name*, to hundreds and thousands of his countrymen.

There is one thing worthy of special observation in the Morals of Shakespeare, which presents his character in a very interesting light; I refer to the strong tincture which they have of Divine truth, affording evidence of his mind having been *deeply imbued with the pure morality of the Gospel*. This highly interesting feature of his morals I have pointed out in many instances, by references to particular passages of Scripture.

Preface to *The Wisdom and Genius of Shakespeare*;  
by the Rev. THOMAS PRICE. 1838.

Shakespeare, above all men, either in his own age or since, was the Poet of Humanity and the Prince of Moral philosophers.



His life was gentle ; and the elements  
 So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up  
 And say to all the world — *This was a Man !*

*Julius Cesar.*

*A most incomparable Man !* breathed, as it were,  
 To an untirable and continue goodness.

*Timon of Athens.*

A sweeter and a lovelier Gentleman,  
 Framed in the prodigality of Nature,  
 The spacious world cannot again afford !

*King Richard III.*

He was a Man, take him for all in all,  
*Eye* shall not look upon his like again !

*Hamlet.*

I have already shown, that he instilled *charity* and inculcated *forbearance*, in an intolerant and persecuting age; that he propagated *peace principles* in a warlike age; that he denounced *dueling*, deprecated *slavery*, and branded *usury*, in a fashionably immoral and avaricious age; that he held *intemperance* up to public detestation in a riotous and drinking age — that he taught Princes they were *men*, and Mankind that they are *brethren*. Shakespeare stands an INCOMPARABLE man; as much out of the category of eminent men, as he is out of the crowd : HE STANDS ALONE —

In strength a demigod, in profundity of view a prophet, in wisdom a guardian spirit of a higher order, Shakespeare lowered himself to mortals, as if unconscious of his superiority, and was as open and unassuming as a child.

SCHLEGEL.



## CHAPTER XII.

*Shakespeare's Female Characters.*

O, Woman; lovely Woman! Nature made thee  
 To temper Man; we had been brutes without you :  
 There's in you all that we believe of Heaven ;  
 Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,  
 Eternal joy, and everlasting love !

Though the stockfish-souled reader of Otway's lines may exclaim, *How extravagant! What nonsense!* there are those who can echo them from the very bottom of their hearts. All men are *not* stocks and stones; and when you, gentle reader, shall have taken a survey of

*Shakespeare's splendid gallery of Female portraits,* you will scarcely be disposed to quarrel with the warmth of Otway's expressions. Look at such intellectual creations as Portia, Isabella, Beatrice, and Rosalind; did you ever see anything like them? Mrs. Jameson, writing of their *mental* superiority, observes —

In Portia it is intellect kindled into romance, by a poetical imagination; in Isabel, it is intellect elevated by religious principles; in Beatrice, intellect animated by spirit; in Rosalind, intellect softened by sensibility. The wit which is lavished on each, is profound, or pointed, or sparkling, or playful — but, *always feminine*; like spirit distilled from flowers, it always reminds us of its origin; it is a volatile essence, sweet as powerful: and, to pursue the comparison a step farther, the wit of Portia is like attar of roses, rich and concentrated; that of Rosalind, like cotton dipped in aromatic vinegar; the wit of Beatrice is like sal volatile; and that of Isabel, like the incense wafted to heaven. Of these exquisite characters, considered as dramatic and poetical conceptions, it is difficult to pronounce which is most perfect in its way, most admirably drawn, most highly finished. But, if considered in another point of view, as women and individuals, as breathing realities, clothed in flesh and blood, I believe we must assign the first rank to Portia, as uniting in herself, in a more eminent degree than the other, all the noblest and most loveable qualities that ever met together in *woman*.

Farther on, in the same volume (p. 91) this admirable writer remarks —

The *love* that is so chaste and dignified in Portia, so airy-delicate and fearless in Miranda, so sweetly confiding in Perdita, so playfully fond in Rosalind, so constant in Imogen, so devoted in Desdemona, so fervent in Helen, so tender in Viola, is *each* and *all* of *these* in Juliet.

*Characteristics of Women.*

I designedly bring the discriminating Mrs. Jameson prominently forward at the opening of this Chapter, to spare me the trouble [properly *trouble*] of re-stating a host of charges against Shakespeare's female characters, and to spare you, my readers, the annoyance of perusing the confutations I should have to present. I am averse from [not *averse to*] wasting time and paper in defending the master-artist against the false representations given of his Females; I prefer pointing out a dozen of the many highly finished Portraits which adorn his wonderful [not *wondrous*] Dramas; and the following lines from Knight (the great Poet's enthusiastic, clever — ay, best editor) may serve for an introduction —

It is to Shakespeare that *woman* owes, more than to any other human authority, *the popular elevation of the Feminine character*, by the most matchless delineation of its *purity*, its *faith*, its *disinterestedness*, its *tenderness*, its *heroism*, its union of *intellect and sensibility*.

To me, it is passing strange, that so many of the Fair-sex should have suffered unfavorable notions, respecting Shakespeare's representations of Females, to have taken such deep root in their minds; for, I know not any poet, any writer, who has portrayed Woman so true to nature; who has tinted Females so delicately, who has colored them so fascinatingly, who has finished them so tastefully —

Who sees the heavenly Rosaline,  
That, like a rude and savage man of Inde,  
At the first opening of the gorgeous East,  
Bows not his vassal head; and, stricken blind,  
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast?

*Love's Labor's Lost.*

It is to Shakespeare's lasting credit, and ought to be considered by my fair readers as *a very high compliment*

paid to the Sex, that all the *sarcasms* passed upon Women, in the writings of the Secretary of Nature, he has issued out of the throats of villains and low-lived fellows. It is high time that those of my fair readers who fancy that Shakespeare has not done them justice, or not represented them advantageously, should read him for themselves, and *change* their opinion; for, his Female characters, constituting an

*Imperishable gallery of ever-living Portraits,*

are beautiful and womanly beyond compare — if we except those which he drew expressly to show how fallen, how depraved, even the gentle heart of Woman *may* become. I recommend my fair readers, before retiring to rest after reading this paragraph, to turn to the Close of 4th Act of Love's Labor's Lost, and read and admire and dream of the captivating Shakespeare's *Eulogy on Woman*, in Biron's address to his comrades.

In Shakespeare's Females we have specimens of *delicacy* and *refinement*, surpassing anything to be met with in any other writer — matchless specimens; and yet, Collins (in his poetical Epistle to Sir Thomas Hanmer, on his edition of the Poet's works) has evinced his lack of discernment, by penning that too often quoted line,

But stronger Shakespeare felt for *man* alone!

which is nothing short of a libel on the Poet of Humanity; for, he had the highest and most honorable appreciation of Females — in fact, no other author that I have read, has done the Fair-sex common justice. Sometimes, he sets Woman before us in the most amiable and endearing lights — as existing in her *attachment only*; a pure abstraction of the affections; *good* and *lovely*. Helena says,

My imagination

Carries no favor in it, but my Bertram's.

I am undone, there is no living, none,

If Bertram be away.

This is that same Helena the poet has represented as one  
Whose beauty did astonish the survey  
Of richest eyes; whose words all ears took captive;  
Whose dear perfection, hearts that scorned to serve,  
Humbly called *mistress*.

How lovely the amiable Portia stands by the side of the

gentlemanly Bassanio, when, immediately after his fortunate selection of the right Casket, she says —

You see, my lord Bassanio, where I stand,  
 Such as I am: though, for myself *alone*  
 I would not be ambitious in my wish,  
 To wish myself much better; yet, *for You*,  
 I would be trebled\* twenty times myself; [*\*trebbled*  
 A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more  
 That only to stand high in your account, [rich:  
 I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends,  
 Exceed account: but, the full sum of me,  
 Is sum of Nothing; which, to term in gross,  
 Is an unlessoned Girl, unschooled, unpractised:  
 Happy in this, she is not yet so old  
 But she may *learn*; happier than this,  
 She is not bred so dull but she *can* learn;  
 Happiest of all, is, that her gentle spirit  
 Commits itself to yours to be *directed*,  
 As from her lord, her governor, and her king.

Let Mrs. Jameson's opinion have its due weight on my fair readers —

It is singular, that, hitherto, no critical justice has been done to the character of Portia: it is yet more wonderful, that one of the finest writers on the eternal subject of Shakespeare and his perfections, should accuse Portia of *pedantry* and *affectation*, and confess she is not a great favorite of his — a confession quite worthy of him, who avers his predilection for *servant maids*, and his preference of the Fannys and the Pamelas over the Clementinas and Clarissas. (See Hazlitt's Essays. Vol. II. p. 167)

Too naturally frank for disguise, too modest to confess her depth of love, while the issue of the trial remains in suspense — the conflict between love and fear, and maidenly dignity, cause the most delicious confusion that ever tinged a woman's cheek, or dropped in broken utterance from her lips.

*Portia*. I pray you, tarry; pause a day or two,  
 Before you hazard;\* for, in choosing wrong [*\*hazzard*  
 I lose your company; therefore, forbear awhile:  
 There's something tells me — but, it is *not Love* —  
 I would not lose you; and you know yourself,  
*Hate* counsels not in such a quality:  
 But, lest you should not understand me well —

And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought —  
 I would detain You here some month or two,  
 Before you venture for me. I could teach you  
 How to choose right, but then, I am forsworn:  
 So will I never be! so may you miss me;  
 But, if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,  
 That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes!  
 They have o'erlooked\* me, and divided me; [\*enchanted  
 One half of me is yours, the other half yours —  
 Mine own, I would say; but, if mine, then yours,  
 And so *all* yours! *Merchant of Venice.*

Hazlitt, however clever he may be accounted in some respects, never inspired me with admiration for his *judgement*; hence, I think and write of him as *not* entitled to that deference which some critics have paid him. I cannot appreciate highly the judgement of the man, who writes —

Portia is not a very great favorite with us; neither are we in love with her maid, Nerissa. Portia has a certain degree of affectation and pedantry about her, which is very unusual in Shakespeare's women, but which, perhaps, was a proper qualification for the office of a "Civil doctor," which she undertakes and executes so successfully. The speech about Mercy is very well; but, there are a thousand finer ones in Shakespeare. We do not admire the scene of the Caskets; and object intirely to the Black Prince Morocchius. We should like Jessica better if she had not deceived and robbed her father, and Lorenzo, if he had not married a Jewess, though he thinks he has a right to wrong a Jew.

*Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.*

Now, is not this too bad? Is it not every way unworthy of a boasted admirer of Shakespeare? Is it not disgraceful to a professed critic on Shakespeare? But, I must not be severe upon him — poor fellow, who knows what he may have been suffering while penning the paragraph I have quoted! he had many thorns thrown on his path through this world, and, perhaps, seldom knew what it was to sleep on a bed of roses! Justice to Shakespeare, however, demands I give it as my opinion, that Hazlitt blundered most egregiously in the passage just quoted. The Speech on Mercy, so admired by all, has not a line worth Hazlitt's quoting; he thinks (or, at least, he avows he thinks) "there are a thousand finer ones in Shakespeare!" I wish I knew

where to find 5 hundred, or even 5 dozen of them. He does not like the Casket scene — containing such exquisite beauties! and “objects intirely to the Black Prince!” whom Shakespeare introduced for the express purpose of inculcating *one of his finest moral lessons*. Hazlitt would have liked Lorenzo better, “if he had not married a Jewess;” perhaps, he would have liked Christ better, if he had not been a Jew. What illiberality! But, poor Hazlitt was not singular even in this; he had thousands to bear him company in his sneers and invectives against that much wronged race to whom we *Christians* are indebted for all that we hold most precious; and, untill Baron Rothschild shall be received with open arms by “the wisest body of men in the nation,” I shall not entertain any very exalted notions of the genuineness of their Christianity —

The *tongue* is but an instrument, on which Man  
Plays what tune he pleases; 'tis in the *deed*,  
The unequivocal, authentic deed, we read *the heart*!

Quoted from Memory.

Hazlitt obtained, and still retains, the title and authority of *critic* — and a critic on Shakespeare too; but I, who, during a quarter of a century, was under the necessity of reading foreign more than native writers, happen to know *the sources* whence he drew most of his valuable critiques; and many of my views, many of my expressions, may be found in Hazlitt, though used by me in public, long before I read them in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*: I had consulted the same writers; and I, like Hazlitt, had appropriated their sentiments whenever they answered my purposes; I am not ashamed of acknowledging how much I owe to foreign writers on Shakespeare — nay, I am willing that my readers should attribute whatever they approve in this Essay to other men, and put down whatever they disapprove to my private account.

Before my departure for the Continent, Hazlitt publicly took for his motto, the bragging words of Iago —

I am nothing, if not Critical! [1818]

and he certainly contrived to write many articles in the Morning Chronicle, the Champion, the Examiner, and even in the Times, which were read with eagerness, nearly 40 years back — and many of them please still: nevertheless, Hazlitt was not *man* enough to write upon Shakespeare,

though he was said to be "thoroughly capable of writing on the Actors of Shakespeare's Plays;" for, whenever Hazlitt excels, I usually see SCHLEGEL & Co. guiding his pen. O, how angry he used to make Kemble, Kean, Young, and others, with his "unfair critiques;" and, certainly, he was, sometimes, "enough to provoke a saint!" He was an exasperating criticiser; frequently giving an arrogant dogma, instead of a valid reason; thrusting an impudent assertion in a man's face, instead of presenting a why or wherefore. For instance, in a public criticism on Kean's acting Hamlet, Hazlitt's words stand —

His pronunciation of the word *contumely*, is, we apprehend, not authorized by custom, or by the metre! Now, this is a specimen of that audacious criticism which is characteristic of Hazlitt. He does not inform his readers *how* Kean pronounced it, nor *how* he himself fancied it ought to be pronounced; he does not condescend "to make the worse *appear* the better reason," but, writing like one having authority, Hazlitt puts a condemnatory mark on Kean's pronunciation of *contumely*, "without or rhyme or reason." Yet, Kean was right, and Hazlitt was wrong. Kean pronounced the word in 4 syllables, with the accent on the first, and liquidized the t — kòn-tshoo-me-le; while Hazlitt, on being interrogated, had not any reason to assign for his unanalogical and un-rhythmical utterance beyond, "it is so, because, it is so." Similar to this dogmatical censure of Kean's pronunciation of *contumely*, is Hazlitt's audacious censure on Shakespeare — "we object intirely to the Black Prince" — *we object*, indeed! *we object intirely!* and why? As in the censure on Kean, so in this critique on Shakespeare, there is not any *reason* assigned; all that we know or are allowed to know of the matter, amounts to this — I, William Hazlitt, a self-constituted Critic, do, in my assumed authority, condemn Shakespeare for having introduced the Black Prince into the miserable Casket-scene in his Merchant of Venice!

But, let not my readers be brow-beaten by a critic of Hazlitt's stamp. His objecting to the Black Prince, shall not prevent my approving the introduction — it is peculiarly Shakespearean; and had Hazlitt seen more of the *magnanimity* of Shakespeare and penetrated deeper into his *aims*, he would not so intirely have objected to the Prince Mo-



rocchius, whom the stanch friend of humanity purposely introduced, on the introduction of *Slavery* into our foreign possessions. Of Shakespeare's *philanthropy*, his critics seem not to have been sensible; notwithstanding his having propagated, again and again, in a variety of modes of expression — God hath made of *one* blood all nations of men! I would not lose this single evidence of Shakespeare's philanthropy, for all that Hazlitt ever writ. Even as the delicate Desdemona saw Othello's visage in his mind, so the amiable Portia confesses that the *blackness* of the Prince was no bar to her *affection* — Generous, noble, magnanimous Shakespeare! And what pains he took to make Portia one of the most loveable of all his females, is very apparent. That "most beautiful Pagan," Jessica, in whom the kind-hearted Shakespeare threw a veil of bewitching sweetness over the national features, but whom Hazlitt slights, because she is a *Jewess*, bears her enthusiastic testimony to the superior graces of Portia —

*Lorenzo.* How dost thou like the lord Bassanio's Wife?

*Jessica.* Past all expressing! It is very meet

The lord Bassanio live an upright life;

For, having such a blessing in his lady,

He finds the joys of heaven here on earth;

And, if on earth he do not mean it, it

Is reason he should never come to heaven.

Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match,

And on the wager lay two earthly women,

And Portia one, there must be something else

Pawned with the other; for, *the poor rude world*

*Hath not her fellow!*

Never you mind, gentle reader, what others say or write of Shakespeare, but study his pages for yourself — "pages, the richest, the purest, the fairest, which genius uninspired ever laid open. *The Times*, 14 Dec. 1837.

Julia has been severely and indefensibly criticized; but, it would require too much space to examine the Character fully; I shall therefore pass it, after presenting the following passage from our ablest living critic, Charles Knight —

Julia, in the sweetest feminine tenderness, is intirely worthy of the poet of Juliet and Imogen. Amidst her deep and sustaining love, she has all the playfulness that belongs to the *true* Woman. When she

receives the letter from Proteus, the struggle between her affected indifference and her real disposition to cherish a deep affection, is exceedingly pretty. Then comes, and very quickly, the developpment [*development*] of the *change* which real love works—the plighting of her troth with Proteus—the sorrow for his absence—the flight to him—the grief for his perjury—the forgiveness. How full of heart and gentleness is all her conduct, after she has discovered the inconstancy of Proteus! How beautiful an *absence* is there of all upbraiding, either of her faithless lover, or of his new mistress. Of the one she says,

Because I love him, I must pity him ;  
the other she describes, without a touch of envy, as  
A virtuous gentlewoman, mild, and beautiful.

*Two Gent. of Verona.* p. 70 & 71.

Now, for a peep at Imogen.

By the vile insinuations of Imogen's stepmother, Cymbeline was instigated against his daughter, and incensed against her husband, Posthumus Leonatus, who had been privately married. Posthumus is banished from Cymbeline's court and kingdom ; and the lovers are overwhelmed with grief. When Pisanio informs Imogen of her husband's departure, how beautiful her expressions ! [haven,

*Imogen.* I would thou grew'st unto the shores o' the  
And questioned every sail ! If he should write,  
And I not have it, 'twere a paper lost —  
As offered mercy is. What was the last  
That he spoke to thee ?

*Pisanio.* It was, *His queen, his queen !*

*Imogen.* Then waived\* his handkerchief ? [not *waved*

*Pisanio.* And kissed it, madam.

*Imogen.* Senseless linen!\* happier therein than I !

And that was all ? [\*linnen

*Pisanio.* No, madam ; for, so long  
As he could make me with his eye and ear  
Distinguish him from others, he did keep  
The deck, with glove or hat or handkerchief  
Still waiving, as the fits and stirs of his mind  
Could best express how slow his soul sailed on,  
How swift his ship.

*Imogen.* Thou should'st have made him  
As little as a crow, or less, ere left  
To after-eye him.

*Pisanio.* Madam, so I did. [them, but

*Imogen.* I would have broke mine eye-strings, cracked  
To look upon him ; till the diminution  
Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle —  
Nay, followed him, till he had melted from  
The smallness of a gnat, to air ; and then —  
Have turned mine eye, and wept. But, good Pisanio,  
When shall we hear from him ?

*Pisanio.* Be assured, madam,  
With his next vantage\* [\*first opportunity

*Imogen.* I did not take my leave of him, but had  
Most pretty things to say : ere I could tell him  
How I would think on him, at *certain* hours,  
Such thoughts, and such ; or, I could make him swear  
The Shees of Italy should not betray  
Mine interest and his honor ; or, have charged him,  
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,  
To encounter me with orisons — for, then,  
I am in heaven for Him ; or, ere I could  
Give him that parting kiss, which I had set  
Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father,  
And, like the tyrannous breathing of the north,  
Shakes all our buds from growing !

Of the so-characterized *shamefully indecorous position*, in which Shakespeare has placed Imogen, I am unable to detect the slightest degree of indelicacy. Iachimo is not introduced into Imogen's bedroom by Beaumont and Fletcher, by Ravenscroft or Dryden, by Sheridan or Byron, nor by any dramatist of our day, but, by the pure-minded and exquisitely delicate Father of the English Drama : and startling as is the situation of Imogen, we feel not the least alarm ; we have a consciousness of her perfect safety, though placed in utter helplessness ; and the instant Iachimo says —

'Tis her breathing

That perfumes the chamber thus :

'tis as if we saw her guardian angel hovering over her ; and, instead of our beholding " a shamefully indecorous position," the scene is one of the most refined delicacy.

Campbell remarks on the play of Cymbeline —

It introduces us to a feast of the *chastest* luxury, in the sleeping scene, when we gaze on the shut eyelids of Imogen ; and that scene — how ineffably rich as well as modest ! is followed by others that swell our

interest to enchantment. Imogen hallows to the imagination everything that loves her and that she loves in return; and when *she* forgives Posthumus, *who* may dare to refuse him pardon? Then, in her friendship with her unconscious Brothers of the mountain cave, what delicious touches of romance! I think I exaggerate not, in saying, that Shakespeare has nowhere breathed more pleasurable feelings over the mind, as an antidote to tragic pain, than in *Cymbeline*.

Wordsworth has a pseudo-philosophical remark upon the inimitable dramatist, which has been said to be "applicable to *all* his tragedies" —

Shakespeare's writings, in their most pathetic scenes, never act upon us as pathetic beyond the bounds of pleasure :

but, considerate reader, don't you accept such remarks as "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;" reflect, for a moment, on the difference in the constitution of men's minds, and then, you will be prepared to admit, that what was not "pathetic beyond the bounds of pleasure" to Wordsworth, might act upon Johnson — and, confessedly, did act upon him, as pathetic beyond endurance, and created positive painfulness of feeling.

Mrs. Jameson, in her *Characteristics of Women*, has thus analyzed Imogen —

Others of Shakespeare's characters are (as dramatic and poetical conceptions) more striking, more brilliant, more powerful; but, of all his Women, considered as individuals rather than as heroines, Imogen is the most perfect. Portia and Juliet are pictured to the fancy with more force of contrast, more depth of light and shade; Viola and Miranda with more ærial delicacy of outline; but, there is no female portrait that can be compared to [*with, contrasted to*] Imogen as a *woman* — none in which so great a variety of tints are mingled together into such perfect harmony.

And what says Schlegel, whom Mrs. Jameson has very aptly designated, "the most eloquent of Critics" —

In the character of Imogen, no one feature of Female excellence is omitted: her chaste tenderness, her softness, and her virgin pride, her boundless resignation, and her magnanimity towards her mistaken husband, by whom she is unjustly persecuted, her adventures in

disguise, her apparent death, and her recovery, form altogether a picture equally tender and affecting.

Unlike other artists, Shakespeare has not interested us in the *persons* of his Females; but, he has let us into their very *hearts*; and no one ever equaled him in depicting that lovely and captivating *feminality* which reclines on the strength of its affection for support, succor, and comfort. The natural feebleness and loveliness of the Female character, has called forth Shakespeare's power and magnanimity, on many occasions; and there is not any quality which has exalted Shakespeare higher in my esteem, than that which renders him so essentially *feminine* — though one of the least *effeminate* of men.

Observe, critical reader, between *effeminate* and *feminine* there is a wide difference. I dearly love a *feminine* man, while an *effeminate* one disgusts me. You cannot insult a Gentleman more grossly, than by calling him *effeminate* — or a Lady, than by telling her she is *mannish*; neither can you pay a Lady a higher compliment than (with Ben Jonson) to designate her *manly*; nor a Gentleman, than to pronounce him *feminine*. Shakespeare, who observed everything and noted everything worthy of observation, has made Patroclus say,

A Woman impudent and *mannish* grown,

Is not more loathed than an *effeminate* Man

In time of action.

*Troilus and Cressida.*

Shakespeare, I conceive to have been eminently *feminine* without an iota of *effeminacy* —

Complete in feature and in mind,

With all good grace to grace a Gentleman.

Behold his Juliet! there's a portrait, my readers, such as no man else *could* draw; a being so lovely and innocent, that she had not a wish nor a thought to conceal: as modest as she was frank, as unreserved as she was unsullied; reposing in conscious innocence on the warmth and integrity of her affections —

My bounty is as boundless as the sea,

My love as deep; the more I give to You,

The more I have — for, both are infinite!

—the slightest particle of *impurity* would have changed her whole character! and none but a *pure-minded* artist, could possibly have drawn such an inimitable specimen of

*purity*. Juliet is without a fellow, either in our own or any other language — she stands alone — and the man who cannot perceive the *purity* of Shakespeare in the *purity* of his Juliet, may, at once, throw his penetration and judgement to the dogs!

Yet, gentle reader, incredible as it may seem, this very Juliet, this exquisite creation of unsullied purity, has been impugned by Critics, both male and female!

But, why should I stop to contradict and controvert what has been published on the “licentiousness and immorality of *Romeo and Juliet*” (the only tragedy which the dramatist founded on a Love-story) it is Shakespeare all over; consequently, between these youthful lovers, there is not anything impure, not anything forward, not anything coy, not anything coquettish, not anything immoral; theirs is an unrestrained, yet pure effusion of Nature — a lasting monument to Shakespeare’s *puremindedness*!

I have read and considered the passages which Critics have adduced against *Romeo*, of whom Shakespeare informs us,

Verona brags of Him,

To be a *virtuous* and *well-governed* Youth;  
and I have not hitherto discovered anything in his character, to induce me to form a meaner estimate of him. The dramatist has been careful to preserve *Romeo* uncontaminated by the impurities common to Youths of his age, rank, and nation, that He might be worthy of his unsullied Juliet; and it is not by accident, but of set purpose, that *Romeo* is made to observe a reverential acknowledgement [not *acknowledgment*] of a superintending power —

But He, that hath the steerage of my course,  
Direct my sail!

As to Juliet, the matchless and unspotted Juliet, her passion was not founded on that love-killing quality *experience*, but, on all the anticipated gratifications she had *not* experienced. In the morning of life, the two lovers were as buoyant as they were innocent; existence was before them; they hastily slaked their thirst at one of the previously untasted springs of promised happiness, and the first eager draught made them drunk with love and joy and rapturous affection!

From what I have written in preceding pages, my attentive readers may easily conceive I cannot entertain any exalted notions of the *modesty* of those, who practise that carping

ensoriousness so prevalent among our over-refined critics; while the alterations (not improvements) I have observed in our so-called *Family-Shakespeares* and *Family-Readings* of some of the happiest parts of our great poet's compositions, have stamped upon my mind an assurance of these Tinkering critics, having felt *a consciousness of their own impurity*; and, instead of their over-righteousness raising them in my estimation, they have fallen very considerably in my good opinion — for, rely upon it, *purity of mind*, the uncontaminated feelings of the heart, *sanctify*, without changing or disguising the impulses of Nature! To the Pure, all things are *pure*. Our would-be-moralists have confounded *modesty* with *hypocrisy*; have not distinguished between *truthfulness of utterance* and *fashionable licentiousness*; and this their lack of discrimination leads me to infer, that these very *modest* and *refined* Critics, are — no better than they should be.

Schlegel, in his 25th Lecture, remarks —

It was reserved for Shakespeare to join in one ideal picture, *purity of heart* with *warmth of imagination*; sweetness and dignity of manners with passionate integrity of feeling.

I do not choose to risk the imputation of *indelicacy*, nor do I wish to insert a single extract from Shakespeare in these pages, that may not be read aloud to *any* company by *any* reader; or, I might insert several passages from *Romeo and Juliet*, from *Measure for Measure*, from *All's Well that Ends Well*, from *Hamlet*, and other plays, as examples of this over-refinedness — beautiful, exquisite, delicious passages, which the pure-minded Shakespeare has managed with all due regard to modesty and decorum; but which, have been tinkered and mangled and spoiled by the hypercritical and hypocritical sticklers of a sickening would-be propriety — a squeamishness that disgusts me even more than open indecency itself — Out upon it!

Of *Romeo and Juliet*, the discerning and judicious as well as enthusiastic and eloquent German critic writes —

All that is most intoxicating in the ardor of a southern spring, all that is languishing in the song of the nightingale, all that is voluptuous in the first opening of the rose, all alike breathe forth from this poem!

Hazlitt has tried his hand at mending this extract from Schlegel; but, Hazlitt has bungled it — like his mendings of Shakespeare.

As to Shakespeare's having "countenanced *suicide* in his *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as in other plays" — as to his "outrageous immorality in recommending to our adoption a heinous sin, condemned in the Scriptures of truth;" the charge is too preposterous to warrant a formal gainsaying. Our great Moral-teacher not only considered *suicide* unmanly, as expressed by Brutus, but also unscriptural, as expressed by Imogen, Hamlet, and others —

*Cassius*. If we do lose this battle, then, is this

The very last time we shall speak together :

What are You then determined to do?

*Brutus*. E'en by the rule of that philosophy

By which I did blame Cato for the death

Which he did give himself — I know not how,

But I do find it *cowardly* and *vile*,]

For fear of what *might* fall, so to prevent\* [\*cut short

The time of life —

*Julius Cesar*.

*Imogen* [to *Passanio*] Why, I *must* die;

And if I do not by thy hand, thou art

No servant of thy master's. Against *self-slaughter*

There is a *prohibition* so divine

That cravens my weak hand.

*Cymbeline*.

*Hamlet*. O that this too — too solid flesh would melt!

Thaw! and resolve itself into a dew!

Or, that the Everlasting had not fixed

His canon 'gainst *self-slaughter*!

This is not the place, or I might *prove*, contrary to the generally received opinion, that there are *fewer suicides* in England than in any other European nation — *fewer suicides* in this overgrown metropolis, with its 3 millions of inhabitants, than in any other capital in Europe — not excepting Amsterdam, though containing less than 225 thousand souls. But, *why* is it, that, in England, our Juries continue bringing in that strange verdict, "temporary insanity" at our inquests on *Suicides*? Why not the like verdict on *all murders*? ay, on *all robberies* too? All *crime* is, more or less, *insanity of mind*; and many other crimes than *suicide*, are, as certainly committed when the parties are in a state of "temporary insanity;" yet, this verdict is peculiar to *suicidal cases* — Let us not be mockers of the Law!



Guizot, a thorough Frenchman, exclaims —

What can be more truthful than the love of Romeo and Juliet, so young, so ardent, so unreflecting, full at once of physical passion and of moral tenderness; without restraint, and yet, without coarseness; because, delicacy of heart ever combines with the transport of the senses! There is nothing subtle or factitious in it, and nothing cleverly arranged by the poet; it is neither the pure love of piously exalted imaginations, nor the licentious love of palled and perverted lives; it is *love itself* — love complete, involuntary and sovereign, as it bursts forth in early youth, in the heart of man, at once simple and diverse, as God made it.

And Schlegel, a greater authority than Guizot, treating of Romeo and Juliet, gives it as his mature opinion, that —

With the exception of a few witticisms, now become unintelligible or foreign to the present taste (imitations of the tone of society of that day) nothing could be taken away, nothing added, nothing otherwise arranged, without mutilating and disfiguring *the perfect work*.

But now, for a Female's opinion — one capable of judging; Mrs. Jameson writes —

All Shakespeare's women, being essentially *women*, either *love*, or *have loved*, or are *capable of loving*; but, *Juliet is love itself*. The passion is her *state of being*, and out of it, she has no existence. It is the soul within her soul; the pulse within her heart; the life-blood along her veins, "blending with every atom of her frame."

The famous soliloquy,

Gallop apace ye fiery\*-footed steeds, [\*fire, fire-y teems with luxurious imagery. The fond adoration,

Come Night! come Romeo! *come thou day in night!* expresses that fullness of enthusiastic admiration for her lover, which possesses her whole soul — but, expresses it as only Juliet *could* or *would* have expressed it — in a bold and beautiful metaphor. Let it be remembered, that in this speech, Juliet is not supposed to be addressing an audience, nor even a confidante. She is *thinking aloud*; it is the young heart "triumphing to itself in words." I confess —

Readers and Critics, be attentive to Mrs. Jameson, if you please !

— I confess I have been shocked at the utter want of *taste* and *refinement* in those, who, with coarse derision, or, in a spirit of prudery yet more gross and perverse, have dared to *comment* on this beautiful “Hymn to Night,” breathed out by Juliet, in the *silence* and *solitude* of her chamber. It is at the very moment too that her whole heart and fancy are abandoned to blissful anticipation, that the Nurse enters with the news of Romeo’s banishment ; and the immediate transition from rapture to despair has a most powerful effect.

Such, my fair readers, is the deliberate and carefully expressed opinion of Mrs. Jameson, whose *Characteristics of Women*, I recommend to your perusal. This fair critic has much more on Juliet, and on other characters, than I quote ; and you may safely read Mrs. Jameson’s critiques.

Let us now take a look at Desdemona,

A maiden never bold ;  
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion  
Blushed at herself :

yet, after she had heard Othello’s story,

Of moving\* accidents, by flood and field, [\*affecting  
She swore — In faith, ’twas strange ! ’twas passing  
’Twas pitiful ! ’twas wond’rous pitiful : [strange ;  
She wished she had not heard it — yet, she wished  
That heaven had made *her* such a Man !

such a Man *for her* — that was her full heart’s wish ; She loved Othello for the dangers he had passed ; she saw not he was black, for, as she says,

I saw Othello’s visage in his mind ;  
And to his honors and his valiant parts  
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate !

The Duke de Broglie wrote, *Revue Française*, 1830 —

Desdemona is the most perfect ideal, the purest type of *woman* — of woman as she is in herself, a being inferior and yet divine, subordinate by the order of human life, free before her choice is made, but the slave of her choice when once she has made it. She is composed of modesty, tenderness, and submission. Her modesty is unsullied, her tenderness is unbounded, her submission is unlimited and absolute. That which

distinguishes her among all other women, is, that she does not so much possess these qualities, as they possess and absorb her. In her soul there is no place for anything else, whether it be indifferent, or bad, or even good; there is no room for other inclinations, other feelings, or even other duties. She has given herself up intirely, body and soul, thought and will, hope and memory. Nothing remains in her nature which she can appropriate to anything else whatever.

Desdemona, as some of my readers know, fled the parental roof; and when her father, Signior Brabantio, in the presence of the congregated Senate, thus accosts her—

Come hither, gentle mistress;

Do you perceive in all this noble company

Where most you owe obedience?

how significant, how delicate, how lady-like her reply —

My noble Father,

I do perceive here a *divided* Duty;

To you I am bound for life and education;

My life and education, both, do learn\* me [\*teach

How to respect you; You are the Lord of *duty*;

I am, hitherto, your Daughter: but, here's my Hus-

And so much *duty* as my Mother showed [band;

To You, preferring You before her Father,

So much I challenge that I may profess

Due to the Moor, my Lord.

She afterwards says, My heart's subdued

E'en to the very *quality* of my Lord!

nor could the change which she beheld in the conduct of Othello, produce any change in her affection —

Unkindness may do much,

And his unkindness may defeat my life,

But never taint my Love!

even the outrages which the deluded and abused Othello inflicted on her, reach not her affection. After striking her and calling her *devil*, her affection remains pre-eminent and unabated —

Alas, Iago!

What shall I do to win my Lord again?

I know not how I lost him!

and on Emilia's exclaiming,

'Would you had never seen him!

Desdemona ejaculates, in the fullness of her heart —

So would *not* I! my love doth so approve him,  
That e'en his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns,  
Have grace and favor in them!

and her very last words, when just expiring from the violence which Othello had used, in smothering her, breathe forth her still inalienable affection —

Commend me to my Lord!

It is thus, in Desdemona's devotedness to Othello, that Shakespeare makes us lose all sight of her *personal* charms, though

A maid that paragon's description and wild fame!

Other writers would have dwelt on her personal charms and fascinations, and have endeavored to interest us in corporal beauties; but, our higher-minded dramatist presents her *heart*, her *soul*, her *love*; and we forget her personal loveliness, in our admiration of her unswerving affection for her Husband. Shakespeare's conceptions of *beauty*, were more *spiritual* than those of ordinary men; he tells us —

In Nature there's no blemish but the mind;  
None can be called *deformed*, but the unkind:  
*Virtue is beauty!*

And, in 3rd Part of Henry VI, York says —

'Tis *beauty* that doth oft make Women *proud*;  
'Tis *virtue* that doth make them most *admired*;  
'Tis *government*\* that makes them seem *divine*; [\*pro-  
Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible. [priety

That Desdemona possessed personal attractions, we know; yet, we know it, as if by accident; as from Cassio's delicately expressed compliment, on her landing at Cyprus, after the storm —

Tempests themselves, high seas, and howling winds,  
The guttered rocks and congregated sands,  
Traitors ensteep'd to enclog the guileless keel,  
*As having sense of Beauty*, do omit  
Their mortal\* natures, letting go safely by [\*deadly  
The divine Desdemona.

Schlegel, an authority I highly prize, has observed —

Desdemona is a sacrifice without blemish. She is not, it is true, a high ideal representation of sweetness and enthusiastic passion, like Juliet; full of simplicity, softness, and humility, and so innocent, that she can hardly form to herself an idea of the possibility of in-

fidelity, she seems calculated to make the most yielding and tenderest of wives.

To throw out still more clearly the angelic purity of Desdemona, Shakespeare has, in Emilia, associated with her a companion of doubtful virtue.

Again—What an amiable, loving, noble character, the dramatist has presented to us in Portia, Cato's daughter,

A woman that lord Brutus took to Wife;

and such a wife! all her soul wrapped up in Brutus. What a fine dialogue that is, wherein she endeavors to extract the secrecy of the Conspiracy out of him; how eloquently and affectionately she remonstrates with him — not for her own sake, but, purely for his; forcing from his harassed soul that noble burst of manly tenderness —

You are my true and honorable wife!

As dear to me as are the ruddy drops

That visit my sad heart!

Then, her breathless impatience and panting anxiety to learn from Lucius the *event* of the Conspiracy, is admirably depicted; and her fears — the results of her fervid affection for Brutus, which hurried her into distraction —

And, her attendants absent, swallowed Fire!

Who, but Shakespeare, ever painted such Female portraits? who else, among our 500 poets and 5,000 novelists, has given us such exquisite delineations, such tasteful finishings?

Shakespeare must have been essentially the *Son of his Mother*; all the Fathers in the world could not have given to our matchless artist that *training* which rendered him so thoroughly *feminine*: and, from the Son's *manliness*, *humanity*, and *purity*, I infer, that the Mother must have been a woman picked out of a million; the seeds of his goodness and greatness and gentleness, must necessarily have been sown in his *infancy* and cherished in his *childhood* — A combination, and a form, indeed,

Where every God did seem to set his seal,

To give the world assurance of a *Man*!

Charles Knight, whom I admire and esteem for his enthusiasm and love of our loving and enthusiastic Shakespeare, has, very prettily and justly written —

The love of Viola is the sweetest and tenderest

emotion that ever informed the heart of the purest and most graceful of beings with a spirit almost divine ! and, though some dry-sticks may think such language exaggerated, I trust several of my readers may, on inspection, discover that the Gentle Willy, the Sweet Swan of Avon, our Master-poet, and our greatest Genius, is not merely the most consummate Artist, but, that he handles the pencil of a Magician — as when, for instance, in 5 lines, he produces that incomparable draught of Viola's affection —

She never told her Love ;  
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek : she pined in thought,  
And with a green and yellow melancholy,  
She sat, like Patience on a monument,  
Smiling at grief. *Twelfth Night.*

This needs no comment. It is a whole history of Viola's affections, amply related in 5 lines. I must not, however, omit observing here, that nothing short of the delicacy of Shakespeare's conception of the Female character, could possibly have preserved Olivia from sinking into the *anti-feminine*, in her conversations with Viola, when disguised as the Duke's Page. Nor has any one preserved the feminine character under the masculine attire, so ably and so delicately as Shakespeare — witness the modesty and timidity of Imogen, managed with the like perfect consistency and unconscious grace as in this same exquisite Viola.

It is to the undying honor of Shakespeare, that he was singular in *not* catering for the indulgence of an unrefined nor a depraved taste ; He would not, could not "sacrifice Virtue to convenience ;" it was impossible for his chaste mind to promote the licentious fashionableness of his age ; he knew what allured crowds to witness theatrical exhibitions ; but, He was above stooping to the composition of *immoralities, obscenities, indelicacies* ; his elevated soul was superior to everything which was derogatory to cultivated humanity ; he was the Star of Poets, the Sun of Dramatists, the Prince of Moral-philosophers, the King of Philanthropists, the Chief of Men —

None, but Himself, *can* be his Parallel !

In the prologue to Henry VIII, he publicly disclaims *writing down* to the Taste then prevalent for *lewd* and *ludicrous* Plays, notwithstanding he was aware that his adherence to

grand moral principles and rational amusement, was likely to cause disappointment to certain frequenters of the Theatre : he writes —

Only they

'That come to hear a *merry, bandy*, Play,  
 A noise of targets, or, to see a fellow [mented  
 In a long motley coat, guarded\* with yellow, [\*orna-  
 Will be deceived :\* [\*disappointed

which shows, that our intellectual dramatist was fully aware of the *lewd ribbaldry* his fellow dramatists were in the habit of producing to attract visitors to the theatres ; but, He tells them plainly, that he will not offer up *morality* and *delicacy* on the altar of pecuniary profit, nor sacrifice *virtue* for applause — much less for convenience.

In this same Henry VIII, Shakespeare exposes *vice* and reverences *virtue*, as none but himself would have dared to have done, in that bigoted and persecuting period. He knew, that during the reign of his pseudo-patroness, the hard-hearted Elizabeth, hundreds of writers of less offensive truths than are contained in that Play, had had their Ears cropped, their Limbs racked, their Hands chopped off, their Lives shortened — still, his love of *truth*, *justice*, and *humanity*, prevailed with him over all other considerations ; and, as he affirms,

True nobility is exempt from Fear !

and He was, unquestionably, the boldest Champion for *religious freedom* and *the right of private judgement*, that ever wrote in the English language — not excepting his ardent admirer and follower, the indomitable Milton. Shakespeare seems to have possessed an unbounded reliance on Providence, an inexhaustible store of that moral and religious confidence which he has given to the good queen Katharine — as when addressing the two Cardinals, she says —

Is this your Christian counsel ? Out upon ye !  
 Heaven is above *all* yet ; there sits a Judge  
 That no king *can* corrupt.

The matronly dignity of Katharine, excites and enchains our heartfelt sympathies for her virtues, her defenseless miseries, her mild but firm opposition to priestcraft, her dignified resignation. And such was Shakespeare's reverential and dauntless respect for *injured greatness*, that not even the presence of Elizabeth could deter him from paying his tribute of praise to Katharine. Be it remembered,

Elizabeth, before whom this play was acted, was the daughter of Anne Bullen, and that Elizabeth's pretensions to legitimacy were contingent upon the legality of the Divorce of her Father (Henry VIII) and queen Katharine; yet, notwithstanding this *questionable, ticklish, perilous* point, Shakespeare had the moral courage, in the presence of Elizabeth and her Court, to represent Katharine as *an injured woman*; and, in addition to what he so boldly represented in the drama, he daringly wrote in the epilogue —

I fear

All the expected good we are like to hear  
For this play, at this time, is only in  
The merciful construction of *Good Women* —  
For such a one we showed them!

Mrs. Jameson has observed on Shakespeare's Henry VIII —

If we call to mind, that in this play, Katharine is properly the heroine, that she is exhibited, from first to last, as the very "Queen of earthly queens;" that the whole interest is thrown round Her and Wolsey — the one the injured *rival*, the other the *enemy* of Anna Boleyn — and that it was written in the *reign* and for the *court* of Elizabeth, we shall yet farther appreciate the moral greatness of the poet's mind, which disdained to sacrifice justice and the truth of nature, to any time-serving expediency.

Which of our writers has depicted such *maternal* despair, as that exhibited in Lady Constance, on her son Arthur's imprisonment? what thrilling language!

I am not mad! this hair I tear is mine;  
My name is Constance; I was Geoffrey's wife;  
Young Arthur is my son — and He is lost!  
I am not mad — I would to heaven, I were!  
For then, 'tis like, I should forget myself —  
Oh, if I could, what grief I should forget!  
Preach some philosophy to *make* me mad,  
And thou shalt be canonized Cardinal;  
For, being *not* mad, but sensible of grief,  
My reasonable part produces reason  
How I may be delivered of these woes,  
And teaches me to kill or hang myself:  
If I were mad, I should forget my Son,  
Or, madly think a babe of clouts were He.



I am not mad! too well, too well I feel

The different plague of each calamity!

*Pandulph.* You hold too heinous a respect for grief.

*Constance.* He talks to me that never had a Son.

*King P.* You are as fond of grief as of your child.

*Constance.* Grief fills the room up of my absent Child,

Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,

Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,

Remembers\* me of all his gracious parts, [\*reminds

Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;

Then, have I reason to be fond of Grief!

Fare you well: had you such a loss as I,

I could give better comfort than you do —

I will not keep this form upon my head,

[tearing off her head-attire]

When there is such disorder in my wit.

O, Lord! my Boy! my Arthur! my fair Son!

My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!

My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure! [*Exit*

Mrs. Jameson has several excellent observations on this impassioned Character; such as —

No other feeling can be traced through the whole of her frantic scene — it is Grief *only*; a mother's heart-rending, soul-absorbing grief, and nothing else. Not even indignation, or, the desire of vengeance, interfere with its soleness and intensity.

Constance is not only a bereaved and doting mother, but, a generous woman, betrayed by her own rash confidence; in whose mind, the sense of injury mingling with the sense of grief, and her impetuous temper conflicting with her pride, continue to upset her reason; yet, she is not mad: and how admirably, how forcibly, she herself draws the distinction between the frantic violence of uncontrolled feeling and actual madness!

The grief of Constance is so great, that nothing but the round earth itself is able to sustain it —

My Grief's so great

That no supporter but the huge firm earth

Can hold it up — [*throwing herself on the ground*]

Here, I and Sorrow sit;

Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it!

An image more majestic, more wonderfully sublime

was never presented to the fancy; yet, almost equal, as a flight of poetry, is her apostrophe to the heavens —

Arm, arm you Heavens, against these perjured kings!  
A widow cries — be husband to me heavens!

And again —

O, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth!

Then, with a passion, would I shake the world —

Not only do her thoughts start into images, but her feelings become persons: Grief haunts her as a living presence —

Grief fills the room up &c. [see extract on p. 191]  
Constance, who is a majestic being, is majestic in her very frenzy.

On the whole, it may be said, that *pride* and *maternal affection* form the basis of the character of Constance.

When will the reign of Constance cease? Not while this world is a world, and there exist in it human souls to kindle at the touch of Genius, and human hearts to throb with human sympathies.

#### *Characteristics of Women.*

After these extracts from Mrs. Jameson (an acute, discriminating, clever writer on Shakespeare) most of my readers, I trust, may think favorably of Shakespeare's management of this harshly criticized character; yet, as a certain "snarler," as he is called, "doubts Mrs. Jameson's capability of judging such a character as that of Constance," and "knows not if Mrs. Jameson was ever a Mother;" without stating his objections, without entering his name in this essay, I shall add one authority more; an authority not less than Mrs. Jameson herself, *a Mother*, and every way *capable* of passing judgement on Constance — a character she had studied for years: Mrs. Siddons, who was not only the greatest of all our great tragedians, but a well-read and intellectual woman, as well as a Mother, said, again and again, that "the *intuition* of Shakespeare in delineating that character, struck her as all but supernatural; she could scarcely conceive the possibility of any *man* possessing himself so thoroughly with the most intense and most inward feelings of the other sex: had Shakespeare been a *woman* and a *mother*, he must have felt neither less nor more than as he wrote.

And, where, gentle reader, shall we look for so lovely a picture as the great artist has drawn in Cordelia's affection for her afflicted Father? Mrs. Jameson, whom (for the sake of my fair readers) I have quoted largely in this Chapter, observes —

If Lear be the grandest of Shakespeare's tragedies, Cordelia in herself, as a human being, governed by the purest and holiest impulses and motives, the most refined from all dross of selfishness and passion, approaches *near to perfection*; and in her adaptation, as a dramatic personage, to a determinable plan of action, may be pronounced *altogether perfect*.

Guizot also, seems to have been particularly struck with this admirable character; for, he writes —

Of the five personages subjected to the action of misfortune, Cordelia, a heavenly figure, hovers almost insensibly and half-veiled over the composition, which she fills with her presence, although she is almost always absent from it. She suffers, but never complains; never defends herself; she acts, but her action is manifested only by its results: serene regarding her own fate, reserved and restrained even in her most legitimate feelings, she passes and disappears, like a denizen of a better world, who has traversed this world of ours without experiencing any mere earthly emotion.

*Shakespeare and his Times*. 1852.

Schlegel has expressed much in the following sentence —

Of Cordelia's heavenly beauty of soul, painted in so few words, I will not venture to speak; she can only be named in the same breath with Antigone.

Charles Knight informs us, that Cordelia speaks but 109 lines during the whole Play; this seems almost incredible — yet, I believe the statement, without counting the 43 lines in the *first*, 61 in the *fourth*, and 5 in the *fifth* Act: for, from the beginning to the end of the drama, Cordelia is never absent from one's mind. But, this is not all that Knight tells us; he gives us a volume in a few words —

She is nothing more nor less than a personification of *the holiness of Womanhood*!

And now, my fair readers, *what* think You of Shakespeare's *female portraits*? If the dozen Outlines I have given in this Chapter, but induce you to read and study the Writings of Shakespeare for yourselves, my object in pre-

sending them, will be gained : and to all who have not yet learned to admire and esteem Shakespeare, I would say, in the quaint language of his first Publishers —

Reade him, therefore ; and againe and againe : And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger not to vnderstand him.

JOHN HEMINGE. HENRIE CONDELL. 1623.

Before closing this Chapter, I am bound to make honorable mention of one of our fair cotemporaries, who has laid the Students of Shakespeare under lasting obligation ; by furnishing a

*Concordance to his writings, worthy of Shakespeare :* an acknowledgement which Mrs. Clarke will know how to appreciate.

This lady has been a literary drudge for 16 years ; and she has, happily, lived to see the fruits of her labors published and admired. In the Preface to her neatly arranged and carefully printed volume, she writes —

Shakespeare, the most frequently quoted, because the most universal-minded Genius that ever lived, of all authors best deserves a complete Concordance to his works. To what subject may we not with felicity apply *a motto* from this greatest of Poets ? The Divine, commending the efficacy and “twofold force of prayer—to be forestalled, ere we come to fall, or pardoned, being down ;” the Astronomer, supporting his theory by allusions to “the moist Star, upon whose influence Neptune’s empire stands ;” the Naturalist, striving to elucidate a fact respecting the habits of “the singing masons,” or, “heavy-gaited toads ;” the Botanist, lecturing on the various properties of the “small flower within whose infant rind poison hath residence, and med’cine power,” or, on the growth of “summer grass, fastest by night, unseen, yet cressive in his faculty ;” the Philosopher, speculating upon “the respect that makes calamity of so long life,” “the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller [*traveler*] returns ;” the Lover, telling his “whispering tale in a fair lady’s ear,” and vowing the “winnowed purity” and “persistive constancy” of his “heart’s dear love ;” the Lawyer, discussing some

“nice sharp quillet of the law;” the Musician, descanting on the “touches of sweet harmony;” the Painter, describing his art, that “pretty mocking of the life;” the Novel writer, seeking illustrative heading to a fresh chapter, “the baby figure of the giant mass to come at large;” the Orator, laboring an emphatic point in an appeal to the passions of assembled multitudes, “to stir men’s blood;” the Soldier, endeavoring to vindicate his profession, by vaunting the “pomp and circumstance of glorious war;” or, the Humanist, advocating “the quality of mercy,” urging that “to revenge is no valor, but to bear;” and maintaining that “the earth is wronged by man’s oppression”—may all equally adorn their page, or, emblazon their speech, with gems from Shakespeare’s works.

MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

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## CONCLUSION.

This was Shakespeare's form;  
 Who walked in every path of human life,  
 Felt every passion; and to all mankind  
 Doth now, will ever, that experience yield,  
 Which his own Genius only, could acquire.

AKENSIDE.

What I have written, I have written; hastily, yet not unadvisedly; and though I have not had an opportunity of reading the Essay over as a whole — not even once (as it left me by piecemeal, to supply the compositor with Copy) still, I am persuaded it is calculated to have a happy influence on the minds of my uninitiated readers, in as much as I have constantly recommended Shakespeare, as a

Poet, Dramatist, Moral-philosopher, Philanthropist, to the perusal and study of both Sexes.

In correcting the proofs, I have observed, that, occasionally, I have quoted a passage more than once; but, as a good thing is not the worse for repetition, I let such passages stand — Shakespeare can bear repetition. Sometimes, I have used the phraseology of others, without acknowledgement; and, in all likelihood, often without being conscious of it; for, when I meet with a congenial sentiment, or a happy expression, I am in the habit of thinking it over *untill I make it the property of my own mind*, and afterwards use it without dreaming of having committed the heinous crime of *plagiarism*: I have long appropriated the thoughts and phraseology of others, without committing a designed theft; and as I have not any desire to be ranked among the *Originals*, I publish this little work *anonymously*, that my readers may not attribute such appropriations to any sinister or ungentlemanly motive. I alone am responsible to the public for whatever may be deemed censurable in these pages — whatever may be deemed excellent, my readers are at perfect liberty to attribute to some one else.

I have, now and then, dealt out a hard blow on those I considered delinquents; the Truth ought to be told by somebody, and *it is my duty to the public*, to tell my share — England expects every man to do his duty; and

I have spirit to do anything that appears not foul in the truth of my spirit. *Measure for Measure.*

Hazlitt, for instance, who has had far too much deference paid to his opinions, I have not scrupled to censure for his impudence, while I pity him for his lack of judgement; and because he *continues* to be quoted as an authority, I have shown that my readers ought not to place implicit reliance on all he had the weakness to think, or the audacity to print. He was a useful man in his day, and did the public some service; he had the misfortune to be both *over* and *under* rated. He was a man of sorrows, and had peculiar infirmities, which prompted him to write and publish strange notions and offensive critiques; but, during his life, I never penned a line that could give him a moment's uneasiness: now, that he is released from all his anxieties and pains, I write what would have annoyed him living, but what cannot affect either his mouldering bones or his disembodied spirit. Can even his palliating friend Patmore undertake the justification of such sentiments as the following?

Neither are we greatly enamored of Isabella's *rigid chastity*, though she could not act otherwise than she did. We do not feel the same confidence in the virtue that is "sublimely good" at another's expence [*expense*] as if it had been put to some less disinterested trial.

*Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.*

Common decency forbids my commenting upon such an *impure* and *grossly immoral* sentiment. Such criticisms shock by their barefaced licentiousness, and are highly censurable for their decidedly evil tendency. Who among all Hazlitt's admirers, will venture to maintain that such a criticism was suited to the angel-purity of that Isabella whom Shakespeare has delineated? Who can conceive her lapse from virtue? But, enough! on such a delicate and indelicate point, I may not add more. Let this, thinking reader, suffice to show, however hard I may have hit Hazlitt, I have certainly — *spared* him.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate the many objections, which, after all I have written, may still be alledged against Shakespeare; I must, therefore, request each and every objector to seek for answers and solutions in his own pages: He is his own interpreter, his own advocate; and though Schlegel, Coleridge, and Knight, have examined and refuted 1,000 objections, I recommend Shakespeare as being far superior to these 3 clever and worthy critics combined.

I give but 3 names, the 3 most illustrious of Shakespeare's illustrators; for, though many have done much, these 3 have done more towards setting the Genius of the British Isles in *a proper light*, than a whole regiment of others. There is considerable truth in Knight's assertion—

The art of Shakespeare was *not revealed* to the Critics of the last century!

which ought to have made Knight more lenient towards those who wrote according to the light they had; for, where little is given, little should be required.

There never yet has been a period, in which some discerning writers have not beheld, and maintained, the superiority of Shakespeare; even in the benighted 18th century, the Father of the English Drama had his admirers and advocates: witness the following example—

Our inimitable Shakespeare is a stumbling-block to the whole tribe of these rigid Critics. Who would not rather read one of his plays, where there is not a single rule of the Stage observed, than any production of a modern Critic, where there is not one of them violated! Shakespeare was indeed born with all the seeds of poetry, and may be compared to [*with*] the stone in Pyrrhus's ring, which, as Pliny tells us, had the figure of Apollo and the nine Muses in the veins of it, produced by the spontaneous hand of Nature, without any help from Art.

*Spectator*. No. 592. Sep. 10, 1714.

There are certain writers on Shakespeare, whom I have not once quoted; because, I could not quote them with satisfaction to myself: nor was it *necessary* that I should give a single extract from their writings, as my object was attainable without them; and I could not meddle with them, but at the risk of annoyance. For instance—I have attempted, again and again, to quote the Reverend Alexander Dyce; but, in the passages suited to my purposes, there ever was *a something* which I could not brook to pass without a fillip; and judging from the *tone* of that gentleman's strictures on others, that he must be a cross-grained being, a man of an irritable temperament, I have intentionally avoided introducing his opinion into these pages; using a like forbearance towards him, as I formerly evinced towards Hazlitt. Neither have I any quotation from that arrogant pedant's pamphlet styled, *An Essay on the Learn-*




*ing of Shakespeare*; because, "it has not one passage of solid criticism from the first page to the last!" There are many volumes on Shakespeare not worth reading, not worth quoting. I have read far too many writers on Shakespeare; I have misspent much time in reading unprofitable disquisitions on Shakespeare, instead of reading Shakespeare himself, whose works are inexhaustible stores of knowledge and of wisdom. Malone wrote a pamphlet of 60 pages on the *Date* only, of Shakespeare's *Tempest*! and, believe it or not, Chalmers wrote another, still longer, on the very same subject! One man publishes a volume to prove that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic; another publishes a volume to prove him a Protestant; a third publishes a volume to prove that he was neither the one nor the other —

"Let Blockheads read what Blockheads write!"

I trust I have produced sufficient evidence to convince my thoughtful readers, that Shakespeare was *not* that immoral and obscene writer, some of his critics, commentators, biographers, and others, have supposed and represented him; and, perhaps, some of my readers may be disposed to admit, that I am neither an extenuator of obscenity nor a palliator of immorality: throughout life, I have discountenanced whatever might be repugnant to *modesty*, and not hesitated at condemning *indecencies*, even in the utterance of nobles — obscenity is fulsome! and offends me more in educated than in illiterate companies; is more disgusting from age than from youth; is especially offensive out of the lips of females, whom, however high their rank, it would be gross flattery to call *ladies*; and is nothing short of detestable when uttered by professed Gospel-ministers, many of whom are absolutely *filthy* in this respect — yet, modest reader, notwithstanding all I have written on this topic, I am of opinion, that there is at the present day, a *carping censoriousness* among the educated classes in this country, which delights in *searching after*, in *scenting out impurities*, even where they do not exist; and I have solid grounds to suspect, that a thorough consciousness of an *impure imagination*, not unfrequently, lurks beneath the hypocritical guise of *modesty* — nay more, it strikes me forcibly, that there is a *squeamishness* extant in England, which is not merely discreditable, but fraught with *imminent danger* to the rising generations.

Most of my readers, male and female, are aware, that in the generality of our so-called *well-regulated* families, naught that has any reference, however distant, to the *Sensual relation between the Sexes*, is ever heard, or even remotely hinted at; and this niceness, this fastidiousness, this false-delicacy, is carried to such imprudent excess, that both the *modesty* and *purity* of the younger branches are jeopardized — are driven within the very jaws of perdition!

 Who so fitting as a Father, to put a young man on his guard, against the perils that are approaching? Who so suitable as a Mother, to caution virgin purity against the propensities of nature? Such Parents as leave their offspring to gather information on such important matters from other sources — acquaintances, servants, books — are chargeable with *criminal neglect* of their own peculiar duty! Many a virtuously disposed Youth, and many a spotless Virgin, have had cause to *curse* the fastidious modesty of the Parent, who, *knowing* the inevitable approach of danger, neglected attempting to preserve the Child from pollution! Such excess of modesty in Parents is monstrous, and loses all title to the appellation of *modesty* — it is a frightful, an unpardonable dereliction of Parental duty! and our pseudo *well-regulated families*, are, by far, the most culpable.

How many ages must yet pass away, before England will see the propriety, the necessity, of training up, for the preservation of the rising generations, *FEMALE Doctors and Physicians*? for (let Laughters laugh) none but Females can watch over that particular period in human existence *between Childhood and Maturity*.

Squeamishness is a weakness — sometimes excusable; still, it is a weakness; sometimes, it is exceedingly troublesome, annoying, plaguy; and sometimes, it is a pernicious, a ruinous weakness. Examples I cannot give, without running the risk of having this little work shut out from our over-fastidious family circles — the very circles wherein it is most needed.

Should these adventitious remarks on *excess of modesty*, be the happy and honored means of awakening but One parent to a sense of that peculiar *duty* demanded by the exigences of the rising generation, this Essay will not have been written in vain; and I shall not quarrel with those who may think, or even call me, a *puritanical, hyper-*

*critical, methodistical* writer; nor shall I take it in dudgeon, should I be charged with having infringed on the rights of the *pulpit* — had the Pulpit done its *duty*, the pestilential influences of Squeamishness and the insulting sallies of Impurity, would not have required my censure in 1854 — had the Pulpit done its *duty*, Wars would have ceased, throughout christendom, ages ago — had the Pulpit done its *duty*, National-education would not now have been One of the unaccomplished measures of the State — had the Pulpit done its *duty*, the unjust Laws relating to the whole of our Female population, would not now have been the most disgraceful Laws on record in the civilized world — ay, in the known world, whether civilized or barbarous. Besides, such truths as I have written, on *false-modesty*, are not heard from our Pulpits; their utterance would give most of our Pulpit orators the lock-jaw, and the few who might have moral courage enough to issue them from the pulpit, would drive the dainty religionists out of our churches and chapels; for, our genteel, our fashionable congregations, would not brook the phraseology of St. Paul, nor tolerate the expressions of Jesus of Nazareth. But, the plain matter of fact is, our Pulpit orators are not well versed in the precepts and principles of *Christianity*; though thousands and tens of thousands of them, are tolerable theologians, and pretty well read in Mosaic dogmas and Jewish doctrines. According to the Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noël, M. A. “the actual state” of our Mother-church, is deplorable indeed; for he informs us (and surely He ought to know it thoroughly)

Myriads of its Members have nothing of christianity *but the name*, received in infancy by baptism, and retained without one spontaneous act of their own; and millions do nothing whatever to promote the cause of Christ. Its 13,000 churches are generally without evangelistic activity, without brotherly fellowship, without discipline, without spirituality, without faith. Like Laodicea, they are lukewarm; like Sardis, they have a name to live, and are dead. Of its 16,000 ministers, about 1,568 do nothing; about 6,681 limit their thoughts and labors to small parishes, which contain from 150 to 300 souls; while others in cities and towns profess to take charge of 8,000 or 9,000 souls. And of the 12,923 working pastors of churches, I fear,

from various concurrent symptoms, that about 10,000 [TEN THOUSAND] are *unconverted* men, who neither *preach* nor *know* the Gospel!

Is this *true* or *false*? If *false*, why is such a statement permitted to be circulated throughout the land *without correction*? Why have our Clergy, our Doctors of Divinity, our Bishops, our Archbishops, not contradicted the charge published against them by the Honorable and Reverend gentleman? If *true*, all but the poreblind, must perceive, that the Church is *a trade*, and with Ten out of Thirteen thousand Clergymen of our State-Church, *nothing but a trade* —

From such apostles, O, ye mitred heads,  
Preserve the Church! and lay not careless hands  
On skulls that *cannot* teach and *will not* learn.

COWPER.

In all probability, the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke has done more towards reconciling the so-called *religious world* to Shakespeare, than any other writer in our language. In his erudite Commentary on the Bible; he has introduced many passages from Shakespeare; yet, so great was the prejudice entertained by the Methodists half a century back, that the Doctor deemed it prudent to be very sparing of the use of Shakespeare's *name*; the quotations from the Father of the English Drama, being usually inserted as "the language of the poet of nature" — "to adopt the phraseology of our greatest poet" — or some similarly expressed introduction to Shakespeare's lines. That the Doctor ever ventured to insert the name of Shakespeare at all, is still a matter of surprise with me; for, there are thousands of that denomination of which He was a chief ornament, who, were they but aware that aught belonging to Plays, to Shakespeare, formed part and parcel of the Doctor's *Commentary*, would not lie down on their beds, before the volumes were bundled out of the house. Shakespeare illustrating the Bible! why, the very knowledge of the fact, would be astounding, and make the hairs of many "a weak brother" to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine! It is no exaggeration to state, that in the conception of many thousands of members of that respectable body of Christians, *plays* are as indivisibly associated with *immoralities*, as *ducks* with *greenpease*; nor is *applesauce* more familiarly coupled with *roastgoose*, than *Shakespeare* with *Satan*.

Happily, for many of them, they know not that some of the quotations used by Paul, are from ancient Plays, or they would not think so highly of either him or his writings — they know not that such passages as *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*, had been used in the plays of Eschylus, and Euripides, and Terence, before constituting a part of the New testament, or, some of them would be for tearing Luke's account of the *Acts of the Apostles* out of their Bibles.

I know, from unquestionable authority, that the great and pious Founder of that Sect, had prepared an Edition of Shakespeare for the Press; that it was found among the papers marked by him — *Ready for Publication*; that after Mr. Wesley's death, Dr. Clarke, on a certain morning, entered the back-yard where John Pawson and other Goths were busy burning such Manuscripts as they, in their arrogance and ignorance, did not approve; and I know that an edition of the *Complete works of Shakespeare, with Notes by Rev. John Wesley, M. A.* was among the sacrifices which Dr. Clarke, in utter consternation, beheld offering up on the altar of Prejudice! It is deeply to be regretted, to be lamented as an irreparable loss to our literature of the last century, that an edition of the Writings of our greatest Genius, prepared for the press by one of the most acute and masterly Critics of modern times — John Wesley — should have been burned, exultingly burned, by the rude, barbarous fanatics, who were intrusted with the fulfilment, not of a private, but, a *public duty*! and thousands of Wesley's admirers, will be grieved to learn, that his Papers had not fallen into more honest and honorable hands; others, however, will rejoice at the onslaught which deprived the world of his edition of the *Complete works of Shakespeare*. Only think, gentle reader, what a scandal it would have been considered by the Wesleyans generally, what a blot upon that great and good man's character, had the names of SHAKESPEARE and WESLEY appeared on one and the same Titlepage! why, thousands would not have believed their own eyes!

We know not *what* we have lost; but, conjecturing from the superior discernment and nicety of discrimination, united with his singleness of eye towards the glory of God and the benefit of his fellowcreatures, WESLEY'S EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE, I have a right to infer, would have cast all former

editions into shade, and have raised the long-misjudged Father of the English Drama in the estimation of the *moral* and the *religious* world.

Since the publication of Dr. Clarke's Commentary, the sentiments and expressions of Shakespeare have become familiar in the mouths of several of our best Pulpit orators of various denominations; and within the last quarter of a century, the better educated members of the religious world generally, have ventured to look for themselves into the formerly prohibited dramas of Shakespeare, whence public speakers, in pulpits and on platforms, are incessantly extracting ornaments to their speeches, discourses, sermons. Even the Society of Friends (by far the best educated sect I am acquainted with) no longer condemn the writings of our master dramatist — though there are still those among them, who, as if conscious of tasting forbidden fruit, I have occasionally caught reading him "on the sly."

One thing is certain — Shakespeare is now read by *individuals* of all sects and parties, all classes and grades; and these individuals, like leaven in dough, will gradually and effectively communicate a zest for his transcendent writings throughout the communities; verifying Ben Jonson's prophecy concerning the poesy of the Star of Poets —

It shall gather strength of life, with being,  
And live hereafter more admired than now.

*The Poetaster.*

All that is needed to make Shakespeare a universal favorite in the moral and the religious world, is — the tearing away of the veils that writers of reputation have hung up between Him and the eyes of their readers. The great Secretary of Nature has been rendered almost invisible to ordinary vision, by those who, age after age, have assumed to themselves the province of *thinking for others*. One has written of his *irreligion*, another of his *immorality*, a third of his *obscenity*, a fourth of his *buffoonery*, and so on, untill they have caused his instructive pages, replete as they are with inestimable treasures, little short of a sealed-book to millions.

*Man* has been defined by one writer, *a reasoning animal*; by another, *a thinking being*; by a third, *a rational creature*; but, my respected readers, would not the insertion of the word *capable* have given a more accurate definition? *Man* is a being *capable of reasoning, capable of thinking, capable*

*of becoming a rational creature* — for, in my half-century's journey through life, it has been my lot to encounter but very few *men* or *women* who made much use of their *reason*, who took upon themselves the labor of *thinking*. However humiliating it may be to some of my readers, it is a fact, that we are, *all of us*, the Victims of Prejudice; there are not any minds in an *unprejudiced state* — no, not One — I and all other rooters out of Prejudice, must confess, that we ourselves are daily under its subverting influence. By way of elucidation —

In "Howard's Brittish Princes; an Heroick Poem," published in 1669, on p. 96, may be found the following lines —

A Vest as Admir'd Vortiger had on,  
Which from this Islands foes his Grandsire won;  
Whose artful colour pass'd the Tyrian Dye,  
Oblig'd to triumph in this Legacy.

Blackmore (who was not such a Dunce as his criticisers and ridiculers have represented him) wrote and published —

A painted vest Prince Vortiger had on  
Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won:

and this couplet created "a world of fun" for the dabblers in criticism; scores have had "a fling at it." Green hitched it into his poem entitled *The Spleen*, in the following manner —

This were attempting to put on  
Raiment from naked bodies won:

*making* an incongruity, which is not to be found in Blackmore.

Observe — Blackmore's couplet, though *accurately* expressed, had been bandied about *as an absurdity*, among the big as well as tiny critics of the day; it had been presented to Green's mind *as a ridiculous blunder*, and he had received it as such; but, he showed his lack of discernment in ridiculing it, in his poem *The Spleen* — it was not only a splenetic trick, but a short-sighted critique, and not a very flattering specimen of his critical abilities.

Dr. Aikin, in editing the "Select Works of the British Poets," published by Longman in 1820, elucidated Green's couplet, by inserting the following foot-note, on p. 310 —

A painted vest Prince Vortiger had on,  
Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won.

HOWARD'S *British Princes*.

— which proves that He too, was under the blinding influence of Prejudice. Aikin knew Green was ridiculing Blackmore, and, without reflection, he countenanced Green's senseless criticism.

In Neele's "Lectures on English Poetry," delivered at the Russell Institution, in 1827, you may read, on p. 72, the following discreditable passage —

The Epics of Wilkie and Blackmore, are really not worth our attention. The latter has made himself *immortal* by two memorable lines, which will suffice as a specimen of his merits —

A painted vest Prince Vortigern had on,  
Which from a *naked* Pict his grandsire won!

— and, probably, roars of laughter were heard after the utterance of this too frequently ridiculed couplet. Neele, however, evinced his lack of penetration, by quoting and afterwards printing the couplet, *as an absurdity*. Neele, with all his fancied cleverness, was so blinded by Prejudice, that he could not discover, because he did *not think* about it, the accuracy of "*immortal*" Blackmore's couplet.

Hence, the long-continued *misrepresentation* given by short-sighted critics to Blackmore's historically just and grammatically correct lines, were apprehended by Green the poet, Aikin the illustrator, and Neele the critical Lecturer, as *ridiculous, absurd, preposterous*; and these 3 over-clever and too-quick witted censurers, treated both *the couplet* and *the man* with pity and contempt, from the sheer influence of Prejudice. Their minds were pre-possessed with the *false notion* that Blackmore had committed what is commonly called *a bull*; but, they were more like 3 *calves* for their stupidity. Had these 3 public ridiculers of Blackmore but once *thought* the couplet over, not one of them was so impenetrably dull as not to have discovered that it was a simple statement of a well-known historical fact, in a mode of expression as grammatically and logically accurate, as it is concise and clear to all who will be at the pains of *thinking* upon it — but, as I have before averred — *Thinking* is the least exerted privilege of even cultivated Humanity!

Perhaps, I ought to state, that, in all my readings — and, believe me, I have read far too much — I never met with a hint from any one, that Blackmore was right and his scores of ridiculers wrong — so fatal to the reception of Truth is



the blinding power of Prejudice. I might instance several other public laughers at Blackmore, who have written *absurdly* on his supposed *absurdity*; but One more shall suffice: and that one, shall be a really discriminating and sharp-sighted critic, worth a city-full of Greens, Aikins, and Neeles; no less a critic than Shakespeare's incomparably cleverest Editor — Charles Knight! Yes, Knight, with his hundred-fold penetration in full vigor, stands before me the victim of Prejudice! witness the following period —

We would leave these things to the imaginations of our readers, lest we should fall into some such *mistake* as that celebrated in the 'Art of Sinking in Poetry' —

A painted vest Prince Vortigern had on,

Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won.

*Introductory Notice to Lear.* p. 399.

Well, well; if Homer could nod, Knight may nap occasionally: but, let this specimen of *absence of thought*, teach him lenity towards others. That Knight knows better, that he knew better at the moment he penned the period just quoted, I can prove from his previous writings; but, his knowledge was *not present* with him when he continued the stupid laugh against Blackmore. Had Knight not been pre-possessed with the notion he had imbibed from others, that the couplet was an irrefragable and preposterous *mistake* (as he calls it) I should not have had the proof of his sometimes writing without being at the trouble [trouble] of *thinking*. He, like all the rest of us, sometimes permits others to think for him!

I have selected this example as a powerful influence of Prejudice, of the absence of reflection in the *unthinking* criticisers of Blackmore, because, we have all been taught, in childhood, that the Picts were *naked*, that they *painted* their bodies, that their slain chiefs were *flayed*, that their conquerors wore part of their *skins* as trophies, &c. all which particulars Knight at least knew perfectly well; consequently, it was because Knight did *not think* of these historical facts, that he joined in the laugh of the critics and the unthinking multitude against Blackmore, who was certainly right, and all his ridiculers as certainly wrong.

And, gentle reader, thus it is in matters of more importance. There are thousands and tens of thousands, in 1854, who, from want of thought, talk of the drones of society, as being the *superior*, and of the industrious, as being the in-

*ferior* classes — an insult to Commonsense ! as if Arkwright, Crompton, and Watt, Gray, Stephenson, and Wheatstone, had not done more for England, for Humanity at large, than all the *gartered*, and *ribanded*, and *titled* Sportsmen and Gamblers, and Doers-of-Nothing, put together. Happily, the thinking minds in this country are beginning to award *honor* on higher and nobler principles than formerly; Homer is already looked upon as *superior* to Achilles, Aristotle as *superior* to Alexander, and the day is rapidly approaching, when the unassuming dramatist Shakespeare, will be considered by all his educated countrymen, as immeasurably *superior* to the crowned pedant James —

It is the *mind* that makes the body rich ;

And, as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,

So honor peereth in the meanest habit.

What ! is the jay more precious than the lark,

Because his feathers are more beautiful ?

Or, is the adder better than the eel,

Because his painted skin contents the eye ?

O, no, good Kate !

*Taming of the Shrew.*

Without a previous knowledge of a Reader's taste and acquirements, I feel some difficulty in recommending any particular Play as the most suitable for a *first study* in Shakespeare. Each of his great dramas is devoted to one of the great passions of humanity ; and the feeling which pervades it, is, in very reality, that which possesses and occupies and engages the mind, when under its influence. Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, and Lear, are considered as his 5 eminent tragedies. Lear is our masterspirit's masterpiece, remarkable for the profound intensity of passion — Macbeth is characterized by the wildness of the imagination, the passion of ambition, and the rapidity of the action — Othello is noted for the passion of jealousy, and the progressive interest and excessive depth of feeling — Hamlet is known for the nice development of philosophic thought and refined sentiment — Romeo and Juliet is truly [*truly*] the tragedy of love : upon the whole, Hamlet is, probably, the fittest Play to be recommended as an introduction to the *study* of the profound and wonderfully diversified dramas of Shakespeare ; for Lear, though the mightiest product of the mightiest mind, is, perhaps, the least suited for a *first* essay ; even The Tempest, one of the most original as well as one of the most masterly of his dramas, would not be so unsuitable as Lear.

The mind of Shakespeare, was as a magic mirror, in which all human-nature's possible forms and combinations were present, intuitively and inherently — not conceived, but as connatural portions of his own humanity.

*Quarterly Review.*

He gives a living picture of all the most minute and secret artifices by which a feeling steals into our souls, of all the imperceptible advantages which it there gains, of all the stratagems by which every other passion is made subservient to it, till it becomes the sole tyrant of our desires and our aversions.

LESSING.

Let me, however, in accordance with the advice of Dr. Johnson (which Knight has condescended in 1853, to quote in his "Old Lamps, or New") recommend those who read any of Shakespeare's plays for *the first time*, to read without any reference to explanatory Notes. When once, my uninitiated reader, you feel yourself really interested in any drama, when your imagination is fairly on the wing, let it not stoop to consult either correction or explanation; but, read on and on and on, through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption of text: preserve your comprehension of the colloquy and your interest in the fable, and read on and on and on! and not till the pleasures of novelty have ceased, do you attempt exactness, or pay any regard to Notes and Commentaries — for, I repeat, Shakespeare is the best interpreter of Shakespeare.

Take care, my readers, that you have not anything to do with the so-called *Family Shakespeare*, which, besides being a *family absurdity*, is a libel on Shakespeare. I would as soon permit squeamish alterations to be made in my Bible, as in my Shakespeare; and, as there are many passages in both, unfit for *family readings*, such parts only should be selected to be read in Companies, as may be *read and heard* with all due deference to decorum. I would no more have a refined Shakespeare, than a refined Bible; and though several highly intelligent and really devout men, of various denominations, have written in favor of our having the Scriptures *purified*, I would not trust their *purification* to any man, nor any body of men — no, not to a Sanhedrim, a Counsel of Trent, a Synod of Dordt, a Papal, a Protestant, nor a Dissident septuagenary. I pay as much respect, though not equal veneration, to the writings of Shakespeare as to Holy-writ; and I have no more moral right to *alter* the one, than I have to alter the other.

Remember what I have already written on reading Shakespeare in *extracts* only ; for, though many of his “ beauties ” may be read with considerable pleasure, even when torn from their connection with the text, they are, for the most part, read disadvantageously. In the 2nd volume of Coleridge’s *Literary Remains*, he writes —

I greatly dislike *beauties* and *selections* in general ; but, as proof positive of his unrivalled excellence [*urivaled excellence*] I should like to try Shakespeare by this criterion. Make out your amplest catalogue of all the human faculties — as reason or the moral law, the will, the feeling of the coincidence of the two (a feeling *sui generis et demonstratio demonstrationum*) called the conscience, the understanding or prudence, wit, fancy, imagination, judgement — and then of the objects on which these are to be employed, as the beauties, the terrors, and the seeming caprices, of nature, the realities and the capabilities, that is, the actual and the ideal, of the human mind, conceived as an individual or as a social being, as in innocence or in guilt, in a play-paradise, or in a war-field of temptation ; and then, compare with Shakespeare, under each of these heads, all or any of the writers in prose and verse that have ever lived. Who that is competent to judge, doubts the result ?

Johnson had previously written of Shakespeare —

He has himself been imitated by all succeeding writers ; and it may be doubted, whether from *all* his successors more maxims of theoretical knowledge, or more rules of practical prudence, can be collected, than he *alone* has given to his country.

And the discerning Villemain told his countrymen —

We ought to make Collections of the thoughts of Shakespeare ; they may be cited on every occasion and under every form ; and no man who has a tincture of letters can open his works without finding there a thousand things which he ought not to forget.

Without detracting one iota of merit from any of our *religious* poets (Quarles, Milton, Watts, Young, Wesley, Cowper, Montgomery, and others) I venture to assert, that the hearts and spirits of Englishmen have been more deeply indebted to Shakespeare, than to a host of others ; that

there is no book, but the Bible, that has effected so much *good*, directly or indirectly, as the volume of Shakespeare, whose beauties are daily issued out of the lips of our gentry and liberally educated classes, while his "household words," his "wise saws and modern instances" are as frequently (though oft unwittingly) spoken by humbler classes — it would, in 1854, be difficult to find a mansion, a house, a workshop, a cottage, "clipped in with the sea that chides the banks of England, Scotland, Wales," into which the philosophy and humanity of Shakespeare have *not* penetrated. It may confidently be said of him, as he says of the duke of Buckingham —

His training such,

That he may furnish and instruct great teachers,

And never seek for aid out of himself. *Henry VIII.*

From the shrine of the Bard of Avon, more precepts have been issued into the wide world in harmony with the New testament, have had a more extensive spread, and a happier influence, than most of my readers are prepared to conceive; while his bold manifestations of lofty moral principles, ramified by fraternizing and christian sentiments, have tended, in an eminent degree, to promote the best interests of his countrymen and of mankind at large.

To instruct *by delighting* is a power seldom enjoyed by man, and still seldomer exercised. It is in this respect that Homer may be called *the second* of men, and Shakespeare *the first*. The wisdom of the Greek was not so universal as that of the Briton, nor his genius so omnipotent in setting it forth so attractively. From the several works of the latter, a single work might be compiled little less worthy of divine sanction than any other extant, and by the beauty of its nature far more secure of human attention. But, Shakespeare has done so much in this way, so nearly all that is sufficient, he has made the Laws of the Decalogue and all their corollaries so familiar, he has exhibited the passions and propensities, the feelings and emotions, incident to Humanity, so freely, and as we might say *graphically*, that another such artist would be superfluous: Nature might create a *second* Shakespeare, but it would be bad economy. What *the first* has left undone, may be completed by a much less expense of Promethean fire than would go to the

creation of *a second*. We are therefore not to look for a similar being—at least untill we acquire new attributes, or, are under a new moral dispensation. Spirits of an inferior order—a Milton, a Pope, or a Cowper, are potent enough to disseminate the remaining or minor truths of natural morality amongst the people; or rather, to repeat, illustrate, and impress them on our hearts and memories. Writers of this class, whom we may call the *Lay-ministers of the Deity*, to teach from *the press* instead of *the pulpit*, in the *closet* instead of the *church*, we may expect; and with them should be satisfied. Though we cannot reasonably hope for another high-prophet of profane inspiration to re-communicate to us *the lessons of divine wisdom* which are already to be found in Shakespeare, it is no presumption to hope that the spirit of illumination will descend upon humbler poets, and make them our secular guides in morality.

This extract from the London Magazine, is corroborated by the Retrospective Review, in the following extract—

It is quite impossible to estimate *the benefits* which this country has received from the external productions of Shakespeare. Their influence has been gradual, but prodigious—operating at first on the loftier intellects, but, becoming in time diffused over all, spreading *wisdom* and *charity* amongst us. There is, perhaps, no one person of any considerable rate of mind, who does not owe something to this matchless Poet. He is the teacher of all good—*pity, generosity, true courage, love*. His works alone (leaving mere science out of the question) contain, probably, *more actual wisdom* than the whole body of English learning. He is the text for the Moralist and the Philosopher. His bright wit is cut out “into little stars:” his solid masses of knowledge are meted out in morsels and proverbs; and thus distributed, there is scarcely a corner which he does not illuminate, or a cottage which he does not enrich. His bounty is like the sea, which, though often unacknowledged, is everywhere felt; on mountains and plains, and distant places, carrying its cloudy freshness through the air, making glorious the heavens, and spreading verdure on the earth beneath.

Notwithstanding Carlyle has given vent to many strange notions and unphilosophical vagaries in his Lectures on Hero-worship — several of which the Rev. Mr. Arthur has exposed and censured — I shall hazzard [not *hazard*] another extract from that medley of sense and nonsense —

Whoever looks intelligently at this Shakespeare, may recognize that He too was a *prophet*, in his way; of an insight analogous to the prophetic, though he took it up in another strain. Nature seemed to this man also divine; *unspeakable*, deep as Tophet, high as heaven: "We are such stuff as Dreams are made of!" That scroll in Westminster Abbey, which few read with understanding; is of the depth of any Seer. But the man sang; did not preach, except musically. We called Dante the melodious Priest of Middle-age Catholicism. May we not call Shakespeare the still more melodious Priest of a *true* Catholicism, the "Universal Church" of the Future and of all times? No narrow superstition, harsh asceticism, intolerance, fanatical fierceness or perversion: a Revelation, so far as it goes, that such a thousandfold hidden beauty and divineness dwells in all Nature; which let all men worship as they can! We may say without offense, that there rises a kind of universal Psalm out of this Shakespeare too; not unfit to make itself heard among the still more sacred Psalms. Not in disharmony with these, if we understand them, but in unison!

*The Hero as Poet.* 1841.

I do not expect that *all* which I have written, should meet the approbation of *all* my readers — nor yet of any *one* reader; how should it? Not only are our educational Prejudices different, but, our opportunities of getting rid of them, have been different also. While some of my youthful readers are ardently *acquiring knowledge*, I am as assiduously endeavoring *to unlearn* much of what I formerly spent considerable pains in acquiring:

A man loves the meat in his Youth, that he cannot endure in his Age. *Much ado about Nothing.*

I am just beginning to understand the meaning of that passage, in Solomon, which has often annoyed me —

He that increaseth *knowledge*, increaseth *sorrow*: and I am acquiring a better appreciation of another of his passages —

*Wisdom* is the principal thing, therefore, get wisdom ; and with all thy getting, get *understanding* : for, as Cowper has neatly expressed it —

*Knowledge* and *Wisdom*, far from being One,  
Have oftentimes no connection. Knowledge dwells  
In heads replete with *thoughts of other men* ;  
Wisdom in minds attentive to *their own*.

Unhappily, many persons survey men and things through the spectacles of Books only ; some are silly enough to look with the eyes of others, instead of using their own ; and most of us behold but *one side* of an object, being too indolent to examine it *all round* : now, I wish you, my respected readers, to see with your own eyes, to examine for yourselves, to form an opinion of your own, and to have the moral courage to give expression to your opinion ; never suffer others to see, and think, and judge for you, whether they be Essayists, Lecturers, or Preachers, whether Professors, Cardinals, or Archbishops ; follow you the advice of Shakespeare —

Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice ;

Take each man's censure, but, reserve thy judgement :  
be not *copies* of other men ; but, be every one of you an *original*.

And now, patient reader, having done my best — for it is habitual with me to do my *present best* on all occasions ; not having any silly fears of writing anything “ too good for the public ” — having done my best, I leave you to make the best of it for yourself ;

My endeavors

Have ever come too short of my desires,

Yet, filed\* with my abilities : [\* kept pace with  
it might have been less prozy, had I read it over as a *whole*, with pruningknife in hand ; it might have been more acceptable, had it not been so long ; but, the imperative calls upon my Pen, during 10 hours a day, have not allowed me time in these my leisure hours, to make this Essay shorter — it is as it is —

If to do, were as easy as to know, *what were good to do*, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions : I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. *Merchant of Venice*.



I have had many hours of pleasurable scribbling, of real recreation after the daily drudgery of the pen, while writing the preceding pages; and I now have the gratification of thinking that *good* and not *evil* will accrue from them — because, TRUTH is never *still-born* into the world, never *falls down dead* in the streets; I may not always have expressed it in the most alluring language, still the issue will be beneficial. I have had a pleasant ride on my Hobby-horse; but, as I have no right to fatigue my readers by their sitting too long upon a pillion behind me, I shall close the Essay with the beautiful Epitaph, penned by England's *second* greatest poet, when only 22 years of age —

What need my Shakespeare for his honored bones,  
 The labor of an age in pilèd stones?  
 Or, that his *hallowed Reliques* should be hid  
 Under a star-ypointed pyramid?  
 Dear son of Memory! great heir of Fame!  
 What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?  
 Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,  
 Hast built thyself a live-long Monument:  
 For, whilst to the shame of slow-endavoring art,  
 Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart  
 Hath, from the leaves of thy unvalued\* Book [\*inval-  
 Those Delphic lines with deep impression took; [uable  
 Then, Thou, our fancy of itself bereaving.  
 Dost make us *marble* with too much conceiving;  
 And, so *sepulchred*, in such pomp dost lie,  
 That Kings for *such a tomb* would wish to Die!

JOHN MILTON. 1630.

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## APPENDIX.

*Collier's Emendations of Shakespeare.*

Words are like Leaves; and where they most abound,  
Much fruit of sense beneath, is rarely found.     POPE.

Without dragging the Readers of the preceding Essay on Shakespeare, into the vortex of critical contention, occasioned by *The Book* which the Shakespearean world has been making such a rout about, I shall "say my say" in a Section apart; that those who are not interested in the controversy, may quietly leave it for the perusal of the curious.

Collier (to whom every student of Shakespeare has long been under lasting obligations) recently published "the stirring work," entitled —

Notes and Emendations to the Text of Shakespeare's Plays, from Early Manuscript Corrections in a Copy of the Folio, 1632, in the possession of J. Payne Collier, Esq. F.S.A. forming a Supplement volume to the Works of Shakespeare by the same Editor —

and this resurrection of a Folio, has created as much ado among our Shakespeareans, as if the Ghost of the Majesty of Denmark, in complete steel, had once again revisited the glimpses of the moon. Verily, it has caused much perturbation, a considerable spilling of ink, and sad tossing about of brains. Day after day, week after week, and month after month, our Periodicals have had columns after columns, pages after pages, and articles after articles, on the *Emendations of Shakespeare*; some of them penned with discrimination, others with skill without penetration; most of them with literary talent, but, few of them with becoming *reverence* for Shakespeare. The name of Collier has swayed the judgement of some, while the name of Knight has biased the judgement of others; and though *truth* is the professed object of all, certain uncourteous, illiberal expressions, intimate to me, that some less honorable motive than *truth*, has had undue influence in directing the pens of several of the most ardent controvertists, who, certainly, have not followed the advice of our "good old Herbert" —

Be calm in arguing; for, fierceness makes  
Error a fault, and Truth discourtesy.

Why should I feel another man's mistakes  
 More than his sicknesses or poverty?  
 In *love* I should — but *anger* is not Love;  
 Nor Wisdom neither — therefore, gently move.

And what, after all have they made of it? Why, little more than — a tempest in a teapot!

Now, that the novelty of the *Emendations* has passed away, and Collier sated to satiety with “critical observations” upon them, I expect, for his own, for Shakespeare's, for the public's sake, he may have the generosity to deposit his 1632 folio with all its Manuscript notes, notations, alterations, and emendations, in the British Museum, where I may have an opportunity of *examining* it for myself. I am not so anxious for a sight of it, but what I can wait patiently for a year or two — yet, I am curious to have a peep at it — after the still more curious shall have done with it. I certainly expect to see a *curiosity*; but, out of the *eleven hundred* alterations, I have not any expectation of finding *fifty* that are New — *not* fifty that I cannot point out as known to me, from other sources, *before* Collier made the memorable purchase. In the meantime, I place much reliance on the penetration, and shall trust much to the communications of Knight, who (whatever the clever Editor of *The Examiner* may think to the contrary) is the most thoroughly read Shakespearean of our day — not excepting Dyce himself, who arrogantly writes of Knight as being but a *young* Shakespearean scholar —

May He live

Longer than I have time to tell his years!  
 Ever beloved, and loving, may his rule be!  
 And, when old time shall lead him to his end,  
 Goodness and He fill up one monument!

*Henry VIII.*

To me, it is no disparagement to Knight, that he is as unassuming and modest, as he is well-read and discriminating; nor do I think less of him for *not* being ignorant in spite of experience.

There is nearly a page of Halliwell's “magnificent folio edition,” now publishing, devoted to Collier's volume of “*Emendations*,” of which the Editor states —

The question of *authority* can scarcely here be raised, except to be at once dismissed. Vol. I. p. 202.

Those who can be satisfied with reading Shakespeare by proxy, may find in the said "magnificent folio edition," about 40 pages of "various readings" extracted from the earlier editions, under the head "Formation of the Text"—I have not read them; I should consider it a waste of time to read them, for, I long since subscribed to Horne Tooke's opinion—

The *first folio* is *the only edition* worth regarding. By the presumptuous licence of the dwarfish commentators, who are for ever cutting him down to their own size, we risk the loss of Shakespeare's *genuine text*, which *that folio assuredly contains*; notwithstanding some few slight errors of the press, which might be *noted*, without *altering*.

Should any of my Readers wish to know what reliance is to be placed upon Horne Tooke's judgement, I recommend a perusal of the Second volume of the philological "Diversions of Purley," which evince his right to have an opinion, and also, his right to express it, as one having authority.

I am aware that some of our Critics *will not* read Horne Tooke on *philology*, because, they detest his *politics*—as some *protestants* say, if any *romanists* should be in Heaven, they would prefer being excluded altogether; just as some *romanists* would endure everlasting purgatory, rather than enjoy an eternity of bliss in the company of *protestants*. Leaving all these well-meaning folks [not *folk*, as Dawson will have it] to enjoy their prejudices, I may safely maintain with that worthy Shakespearean John Philip Kemble—

However people may differ with Mr. Tooke in *politics*, I think it is impossible any reasonable mind should disagree with him on *grammar*. I wish we may ever have the conclusion of his system! The work would, probably, be the finest treatise on *philosophical philology*, that ever was, or ever will be, written.

*Letter to Boaden.*

Now, shall I tell you, curious reader, the *cause* of all the hubbub made by our Thousand and One writers on the words of Shakespeare? It is this—they are ignorant of *the roots* of his words—nothing else, depend upon it. Had our host of combatants but known a tithe as much of Anglo-saxon, as they seem to know of Greek and Latin, of French and Italian, we should not have been pestered with so many pages of incoherent conjectures on the *possible* and *probable*

meaning of so many of Shakespeare's words. Horne Tooke was right when he declared, that —

The ignorance and presumption of his Commentators have shamefully disfigured Shakespeare's text. The *first* folio, notwithstanding some few palpable misprints, requires none of their *alterations*. Had they understood English as well as he did, they would not have quarreled with his language.

TAYLOR's *edition* of 1829. Vol. II. p. 387.

I shall give but One word in elucidation; a word which has been sadly knocked about of late by many who did not understand it, yet, strange enough, would not let it alone — the word *rack*, as used by Shakespeare in the following extract from *The Tempest* —

These our actors  
(As I foretold you) were all spirits, and  
Are melted into ayre, into thin ayre :  
And, like the baselesse fabricke of this vision,  
The clowd-capt towres, the gorgeous pallaces,  
The solemne temples, the great globe itselfe,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantiall Pageant faded,

Leaue not a *racke* behind. Folio ed. of 1623. p. 15.

Now, this word and this passage have occupied many pages in our recent cavilings on Shakespeare and his language; and a glance at his Editors, Commentators, and Critics will show, how few of them have had any just conception of what they were squabbling about. The earlier Editors could not consult Horne Tooke; but, every Editor of Shakespeare, every Critic upon Shakespeare, who has written since the publication of the "*Diversions of Purley*," without *first* having read those masterly *expositions* (however learned and acute that writer may be) has not entered so advantageously upon his task as he might have done — the ablest and cleverest writer (though superior to Horne Tooke himself) could not have read his *Diversions* without being profited by them. On the word before us — *rack* — they would have read, among other paragraphs, the following :

*Rack* means merely, *That which is reeked*. And, whether written *rak*, *wraich*, *reck*, *reik*, *roik*, or *reeke*, is the same word differently pronounced and spelled. It is merely the past tense and therefore past participle, *reac* or *rec*, of the Anglo-saxon verb *reacan*, exhalare, to

*reck*. And is surely the most appropriate term that could be employed by Shakespeare in this passage of *The Tempest*: to represent to us, that the dissolution and annihilation of the globe, and all which it inherit, should be so total and complete — they should so melt into *ayre*, into *thin ayre* — as not to leave behind them even a *vapor*, a *steam*, or an *exhalation*, to give the slightest notice that such things had ever been.

Vol. II. p. 393.

This paragraph is not bare assertion (as is the fashion now-a-days) but, based upon preceding examples of the use of the word in a variety of extracts from *Douglas*, *Faerie Queene*, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson's *Masque*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, &c. wherein it is spelled [never *spelt*] in the 6 specified ways.

But, had the neglected Horne Tooke not written a syllable on the word *rack*, Critics ought to have known its meaning from a variety of passages in Shakespeare's own writings — his best interpreters. In the extract already given from *The Tempest*, Shakespeare himself informs his *thinking* reader, only 6 lines preceding the word *rack*, that he means *air*, *thin air*; yet, his Editors, in their blind zeal to correct, to improve the text, have most absurdly changed *rack*, *air*, *thin air*, into *wreck*, wood, thick wood!

Leave not a *wreck* behind;

associating it with *shipwreck*, a solid body; very remote from the Poet's meaning. Hanmer has gone farther, changing *rack* into *track*; which Steevens pretends "may be supported by the following passage in the first scene of *Timon of Athens* —

But flies an eagle flight, bold, and forth on,

Leaving no *tract* behind:

but, *honorificabilitudinitatibus* is also a Shakespearean word, and might as reasonably (though not so plausibly) be interchanged, as the word *tract* or *track*, or any other word which does not convey the Poet's meaning.

Malone wished to persuade his readers, that "*rack* is generally used by our ancient writers for a *body of clouds sailing along*; or, rather, for *the course of the clouds when in motion*:"

and Johnson (who has been unmercifully and unjustifiably censured and even abused by Horne Tooke) gives, in his *Dictionary* —

*The Rack* — The clouds as they are driven by the wind ;

*To Rack* — To stream as clouds before the wind :

Shakespeare, however, has used the word in a *motionless* meaning, when the Player says —

But, as we often see, against some storme,

A silence in the heavens, the rack *stand still*,

The bold *windes speechlesse*, and the orb below

As *hush as death* : anon &c.

*Hamlet*. II. 2.

surely, this *stand still* does not tally with the *motion* attributed to *the rack* by Mason, Johnson, and others ! In the Third part of *Henry VI*, we read —

Dazzle mine eyes ? or, doe I see three sunnes ?

Three glorious sunnes, each one a perfect sunne,

Not separated with the *racking* clouds,

But seuer'd, in a pale cleare-shining skye —

whereon Malone quotes the last 2 lines of the following extract from Shakespeare's 33rd Sonnet :

Full many a glorious morning have I seen

Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye :

Anon *permit the basest clouds* to ride

With *ugly rack* on his celestial face —

but, could Malone really fancy that this *ugly rack* means an *ugly motion* that *rides on the face of the sun* ? In the Sonnet, the Poet has *permit the basest clouds* and *ugly rack* ; and in his Drama he has *ugly mists of vapors* and *permit the base contagious clouds* —

Yet, heerein will I imitate the sunne,

Who doth *permit the base contagious cloudes*

To smother up his beauty from the world,

That when he please againe to be himselfe,

Being wanted, he may be more wondred at,

By breaking through *the foule and ugly mists*

*Of vapours*, that did seeme to strangle him.

*First Part of Henry IV*. p. 50.

Is it not evident, to all but the poreblind, that Shakespeare's meaning of the word *rack* is *vapor, steam* ? and that it may, occasionally, appear to *stand still* or be *in motion*, as circumstances may govern it ?

In the *Songs and Sonets*, by the Earl of Surrey and others, we read —

When clouds be driven, then rides the *racke* :

and in his *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare writes, (p. 362) —

Some time we see a clowd that's dragonish,  
 A vapour some time, like a beare, or lyon.  
 That which is now a horse, euen with a thought,  
 The *racke* dislimes, and makes it indistinct,  
 As water is in water —

and, on this passage, Steevens writes, with his not unusual lack of discernment —

The *rack* dislimes, i. e. The *fleeting away* of the clouds destroys the picture !

but, may not the horse be dislimned (or, *dislimb'd* as in Horne Tooke) by *the approach* of the rack, as well as by the *fleeting away* of the clouds ?

In his Preface to *North Country Words* (p. VIII) Ray informs us —

A *reck*, with us, signifies, not a *smoak*, but a *steam*, arising from any liquor or moist thing heated :

which *reck* is no other than the word *rack* differently spelled ; and again differently in the following passages —

Thou mightst as well say, I love to walke by the Counter-gate, which is as hateful to me as the *reeke* of a lime-kill.\* [\* *limekil* now *limekiln*]

*Merry Wiues of Windsor.* p. 58.

You common cry of curs, whose breath I hate

As *reeke* a th' rotten fennes: whose loues I prize

As the dead carkasses of unburied men,

That do corrupt my ayre.

*Coriolanus*, p. 19.

And what can our learned, our Latin, Greek, and French taught Commentators make of Hamlet's *paire of reechie kisses*? or, of the *reechie recke* in *Coriolanus*? or, in short, of the thousand and one Anglo-saxon words which they hunt through the mazes of French, Latin, and Greek roots? When will they learn to leave unmolested and undisturbed such Shakespearean words as they do not, cannot understand? I seldom read the learned nonsense of Shakespeare's *elucidators*, without being reminded of the following passage, in the Preface to the second volume of Taylor's Hebrew Concordance —

The more learning any man hath, the more need he hath of a correct and cautious judgement to use it well; otherwise, his *learning* will only render him the more capable of deceiving himself and others.

I deem it unnecessary to pursue *rack* any farther; for, if the passages already quoted, be not amply sufficient to prove to my readers that *wreck* is wrong and *rack* is right, in the



quotation from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, all further attempts might be alike unavailable.

The impression on my mind is — our self-constituted Judges of the propriety and impropriety of Shakespeare's choice of words, commit most of their blunders from a *lack of reverence* for Shakespeare's immeasurably superior knowledge and judgement; they have not humility enough to study Shakespeare as incomparably the greatest master of our tongue; and were they but half as familiar with some sister-language, as they are with French, Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, they would not so frequently display their ignorance of English.

Had Collier met with a Copy of the *first* folio edition, in which *eleven hundred* Manuscript "Notes and Emendations" in an apparently cotemporaneous handwriting had been found, *that* would have been a prize indeed, and might have merited the *study* of every well-read Shakespearean scholar; but, "to kick up such a dust" about a 1632 folio, which everybody knows is a very inaccurate Reprint of the folio of 1623, containing many palpable errors which are not to be found in the original, has something so preposterous, so ludicrous in it, that I can scarcely comment upon it with becoming gravity: nor has Collier lessened my risible sensations by considering and announcing himself entitled to a *Copyright* of all the palpably Unshakespearean alterations, as if any true Shakespearean would think of giving up the accurate and well chosen words of the *first* folio, for the various silly and conceited interlopations of nobody-knows-who, that had not penetration enough to dive into that "Well of English" contained in the folio edited by Shakespeare's two partners! as if any man of commonsense would be deterred from adopting what might seem to him a genuine reading, from Collier's foolish appropriation of a right, a *legal right*, to secure all the Manuscript readings wholly and solely for his own edition of Shakespeare — Heaven save the mark!

Halliwell — I beg the gentleman's pardon, for inserting his name so familiarly, as he is "not in the roll of common men" — James O. Halliwell, Esq. F. R. S. who is importantly engaged in publishing, to the admiration of a few, not for the benefit of the many, his "magnificent folio edition" — "strictly limited to *One Hundred and Fifty Copies*" (which, happily, I am not compelled by Law to read) has had the wit to insert, on the 294th page of his first volume, the following sentence —

A careful examination of these variations introduced into the folio edition of 1632, will convince an impartial enquirer [inquirer] that they are neither authorized corrections resulting from a collation of Shakespeare's original manuscripts, nor such readings as would have been obtained by an editor availing himself of authentic sources of information.

Knight — I should as soon think of writing Mr. Shakespeare as Mr. Knight — is getting on very much to the purpose in his Notes at the ends of each Play, in his plain, unassuming *Stratford edition*, now publishing — every word of which I hope to read, though I could not for a trifle be hired to read Halliwell's "magnificent folio edition," after having undergone the fatigue of turning over, leaf for leaf, the first volume only.

Collier and his volume of "marvellous" [properly *marvellous*] Notes and Emendations, cannot be in better hands; and if Knight has but leisure to do *his duty* in criticizing the pseudo *emendations*, the students of Shakespeare will be for ever beholden to him — but, should circumstances conspire against his carrying out his present *examinations* and *expositions*, or, should he *slur over* any parts of his *Stratford edition*, as he did parts of his *Pictorial edition* (witness *Julius Cesar*) there will be regret as well as disappointment throughout the most discerning class of Shakespearean readers, in England and elsewhere — But, I hope better things!

Having intimated my low appreciation of the "marvellous" volume, and my high appreciation of Knight's *capability* of giving his readers additional cause to honor and esteem him, I leave the rest to — Time and Circumstances, over which I have not any controll.

The cloud-capped towers,

The gorgeous palaces,

The solemn temples,

The great globe itself,

Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;

And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,

Leave not a rack behind!

*Altered from SHAKESPEARE.*

===== London, 22 April, 1854.

## APPENDIX II.

*On the Spellings of words.*

Having 8 pages to spare, I cannot, perhaps, occupy them more usefully than with a few Remarks on the Spellings of Words — a subject to which I have paid more than common attention during the long term of 40 years, and on which I have, probably, *read more*, than any one of my Readers. I am as well versed with the writings of our Lexicographers and Grammarians, as any Lawyer is versed with Acts of Parliament and Adjudged cases; a hint (a broad one) given for the sake of those who have never made our Language their *study* — to adepts, any intimation would be wholly superfluous; as they will both *see* and *feel*, from the following observations, that they do not emanate from a novice in Spelling.

By the continued *exhibition* of Errors, men of sense will, in time, renounce them, without any regard to our so-called *authorities*; knowing, that what is radically *wrong*, the authority of the greatest Name cannot possibly make *right*, and that Truth is a higher authority than the first Philologist in the land.

I shall not attempt any learned *discussion* on Orthography, but, simply state a few reasons for my deviating from several of the everyday Spellings in 1854.

It is not yet 100 years since *the first* Dictionary of the English Language, “as Johnson’s, without a figure, may be called,” was published, in 2 vol. folio, price 90s. and it is not yet 90 years since *the first* scientific work on English Pronunciation, by Elphinston, was published; so that our Language, in respect to *cultivation*, is yet in its Infancy: for, what is a single century in the history of a language, in a *classical* point of view! Johnson did much, very much, towards settling the Spelling of our tongue; and he is entitled to this Nation’s thanks for what he did; but, he left much still to be done; he did not carry it to *perfection* — that was impossible — he even fell into several *errors*, and his gigantic work exhibits numerous *oversights*. Those who write and talk about his work (or any other) being a STANDARD, only prove that they know very little about the *nature* of Language. The English is a *living* tongue, *mutable* in its very nature, not admitting of a STANDARD. Many words in common use in Johnson’s day, are now be-

coming *obsolete*; while thousands of words have been *introduced* into the Language, since Johnson penned his ponderous folios: consequently, persons who *know* what they write about, will not be so silly as to set up any work as a STANDARD of a *living* tongue. As a people, we have suffered from undue obedience paid to *authorities*; which are, indeed, *retarders of progress*: Truth is the wise man's *only authority*, to which all *pseudo authorities* must succumb; he honors great Names, but, he does not pay them absolute homage; he *uses* the reason his Maker has bestowed upon him, and claims the privilege of judging for himself. To permit a preceding to dictate to a succeeding generation, is to permit ignorance to be our guide to knowledge; as wisdom is the offspring of experience, and as we are an older generation than the past, we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we are not wiser; if we know not more of our Language than was known to Johnson and Elphinston, their experience and labors have been lost upon us, and we are ignorant in spite of the advantages which they bequeathed to us — if we make them our STANDARD, we *cannot* progress; therefore, let us no longer talk of such nonsense as “the wisdom of our ancestors.”

Now, inquiring reader, I shall tell you, whether you may choose to believe it or not, that *I have read* (not partially but thoroughly) *every great, every celebrated work on the English Language* that our writers have published during the last 100 years — and more besides — even down to such petty and time-taking publications as “The Dictionary Appendix or Orthographer, by C. Vines, Orthographical Professor, published at No. 21, Paternoster Row, 1853,” at the shamefully extravagant price of 4s. though not containing so much matter as you have in these 8 pages of Appendix II.

I shall assign a few of my reasons for *not* Spelling certain words as they are usually spelled by our Printers — a body of men, who with all their knowledge of Orthography, have yet much to learn; and who, by their obstinate adherence to the customs of their predecessors, are among the greatest obstacles to our advancement. This assertion they may term *consummate impudence*, if they please, but it is a *demonstrable truth*, notwithstanding; for, there is not a Printer in London, in England, who is *consistent with himself*! he not only Spells similar words dissimilarly, but,

he Spells *the same word* differently on *the same page*! See the indubitable *proof* of this assertion in that "strange compound" — *An Essay on the Science of Pronunciation* (published in 1850, at No. 25, Paternoster Row) which 6 Reviewers inform us, "no Printer can gainsay" — "nor can any man, not even any teacher, rise from its perusal without knowing more of the English Language than he knew before" — "Teachers especially will find much in the Essay which will repay perusal, and it will be found worth the trifling cost at which it is published" — "it is replete with enlightened criticisms and arguments drawn from facts" — "buy the book, and you will have a Dictionary as entertaining in its way, as *Pickwick* or *Vanity Fair*." I have neither room nor time to insert the *proofs* from this work; let those who feel an interest in it, read it for themselves.

Verbalized nouns I spell with *z*, nouns with *s*; thus I write — analyze analyser analyzing, civilize civiliser civilizing civilisation, fraternize fraterniser fraternizing, idolize idoliser idolizing idolist, memorialize memorialist memorialisation, organize organiser organizing organisation, and so forth — Printers spell all such words *both* ways, for, they have not any Rule to guide them in using *s* and *z*.

In words of more than *one* syllable, when ending with a *single* consonant; preceded by but *one* vowel, and accentuated on the *last* syllable, I double (doubble) the final consonant on adding *ed er* or *ing*; thus, excèl excèlled excèller excèlling, refer referred referrer referring; but in èxcelence rèference, which are accentuated on the first syllable (like òpulence prèference) I do not double the *l* and *r*, lest the reader, seeing *the sign* of the accented syllable (*ll rr*) should pronounce them excèllence referrence, similarly with propèllence occùrrance. Printers spell such words first one way and then another; because, they are ignorant of the difference caused by different accentuations; and not satisfied with contradicting each other, every Printer contradicts himself. These different and contradictory Spellings, by Printers, are attributable to ignorance; but, that our Writers on Language, our professed Teachers of their mother-tongue, who really *know* better, should *not set accurate examples* before their readers, is attributable to lack of *moral courage*, or, a *base motive*. What, for instance, could have induced Smart to head his Dictionary with the two words WALKER REMODELLED? which

he *knew* to be in direct opposition to *Walker's Principles*, wherein we are taught that the word printed by Smart *remodelled* ought to be spelled *remodeled* — with one l not ll — and that *all* similar words should be similarly spelled; as equaled, groveling, marvelous, traveler, &c. Smart surely could not fancy that he was doing his *duty*, as a public Teacher of the language, by promulgating *known Error*, or, by refraining from *exhibiting accuracy* of Spelling! “England expects every man to do his Duty” — and I should have sunk in my own estimation, had I not *exhibited* accurate Spellings in this little work, which every Reader is compelled to *see*, though not constrained to *adopt*. What care I for the laugh of the world! I have long known that Ridicule is *not* the test of Truth, that obstinate adherence to Error is *not* a proof of Wisdom.

As far back as 1775, Walker published the following Rule—

*Ment*, added to words ending with silent *e*, preserves the *e* from elision; as *abatement*, *incitement*, *chastisement*, *judgement*, &c.

APHORISM IX.

But, Lindley Murray, in his ill-judged zeal to uphold the STANDARDSHIP of Johnson (recommended by that clever philologist Nares) notwithstanding Johnson's commonsense argument against his Dictionary being considered as a STANDARD, made 5 exceptions to Walker's rule — *judgment*, *abridgment*, *acknowledgment*, *lodgment*, and *argument* — adding (Rule VIII) These deviations have the merit of omitting an unnecessary letter, without altering the pronunciation of the original word —

but, this is not so; and Lowth, as well as Walker, had shown Murray (who had not penetration enough to perceive it) that the *e* is absolutely necessary in 4 out of his 5 exceptions, to intimate that the *g* should be *soft* and *not hard*: and if it were a “merit” to leave out a letter which did not alter the pronunciation of the original words, why did not Murray make a “merit” of leaving out letters in such words as *agreement excellent*, and write them *agrement xlent*? why not have made a “merit” of writing *buty* for beauty, *diphthong* for diphthong, *giltines* for guiltiness, and thousands of such “merits?” The plain truth is, Murray, though a very *useful* writer, had but little discrimination, and he has already received more praise than he was entitled to. The best parts of his works are the property of others; most of the rubbish is his own. Take his Grammar,

his masterpiece — there is no part so accurate as that which is copied literally from Lowth, from whose “Short Introduction,” Murray has extracted 120 paragraphs! Many of the best practical Notes are copied from Priestley, whom Murray, ungenerously, abused! From Blair you may find about 60 pages, on *perspicuity* and *accuracy*; 15 pages from Campbell, on the law of language; and his Rules for Spelling, are extracted from Walker’s Rhiming Dictionary, from which he has never deviated without falling into gross error: and, to crown the whole, almost every Rule in the book, laid down for the observance of the Scholar, has been repeatedly violated in the Grammar itself, in the parts composed by the Master! If you disbelieve this, challenge me to the *proof*.

But, to return to the termination *ment* — it must be *added* to words, without destroying them. Now, every reader knows, that *abridg agre judg lodg* &c. are *not* words; but, that the vowel *e* joined to these unmeaning combinations of letters will give us the English words *abridge agree judge lodge*, &c. and *ment* added to these words, will give *abridgement agreement judgement lodgement*, &c. Printers spell them, apparently, at hap-hazzard.

Murray and others give as a Rule of Orthography —

*Ness, less, ly, and ful*, added to words ending with silent *e*, do not cut it off: as *paleness, guileless, closely, peaceful*; except in a few words; as *duly, truly, awful*.

Now, though Men and Women but seldom *reason*, Children are reasoning almost incessantly; and the little rogues pester their Schoolmasters and Schoolmistresses out of all patience, by asking questions that cannot be answered: for, “*it is so because it is so*,” is not an answer, but a stupid evasion — with which a reasoning Child is never satisfied. Go into any School in the kingdom, wherein Children are *allowed*, though not *taught*, to Think, and there you may hear Infants asking questions which would puzzle the Rule-makers themselves to answer; questions which Lindley Murray attempted, and failed, to answer. Children have sharper eyes than many of our Correctors of the Press, and they wish to know *why* certain similar words in their books, are spelled differently; and conceiving that their Instructors know everything, they naturally ask — Why are *bluely* and *solely* and *surely* printed with an *e* and *duly* and *truly* and *wholly* without an *e*? why *awful* has not an *e*, like *rueful* and *woeful*? Should they be fortunate enough to be told

that such words are printed "according to Rule," and then shown the Rule and its Exceptions, they then ask, *By what authority* Lindley Murray made the Rule, and *why* he made such Exceptions? They ask for *information*, they require a *reason*; and as there is not One teacher in a 'Thousand that has the moral courage to utter the words — *I don't know* — Children are silenced without being convinced, without being informed.

A Child can apprehend what is rational, but Children in general are not quick at adopting what is irrational; they can perceive a propriety in writing clam clammy, skin skinny, crum crummy, and balm balmy, hard hardy, storm stormy, and cream creamy, room roomy, sleep sleepy, and flower flowery, shower showery, tower towery; but they cannot reconcile snare snary, shine shiny, rope ropy; brier briery, they accept at once, but fire fiery, mire miry, spire spiry, wire wiery, the Teachers have considerable difficulty in driving into their little obstinate (not stupid) heads; for, the urchins, however willing, cannot apprehend *why* persons should *not* write fire firey, mire mirey, wire wirey: they stoutly maintain that *fiery miry wiery* do not give the sounds heard in *fire mire wire*; and you cannot persuade them that it is *reasonable* to follow Lindley Murray, or Dr. Johnson, or anybody else, in Spelling words so that you cannot make out the proper sounds.

Children are easily taught to form slanderous from slander, ponderous from ponder, murderous from murder, and deliverance from deliver, hinderance from hinder, utterance from utter, and so on; but, they think (and rightly too) that bluster blustrous, cumber cumbrous, wonder wondrous, and cumber cumbrance, enter entrance, remember remembrance are not, cannot be accurate.

Sometimes Children may be taught Rules, readily, by the Exceptions; for instance —

The 2 words *award* and *reward*, with their compounds, are the only words in the language which have the accent on the termination *ward*.

The 4 words *discern*, *sacrifice*, *sice*, *suffice*, with their compounds, are the only words wherein *c* takes the sound of *z*.

The 5 words *divertise*, *franchise*, *mortise*, *practise*, *promise*, with their compounds, are the only words of this termination that have the *i* in the last syllable shut — and the second word, *franchise*, is already in a transitive state, passing from the Exceptions into the Rule relating to *exercice*, *mèrchaudise*, *paradise*, &c. wherein the *i* has its open sound.



The 8 words *heir, honest, honor, hospital, hostler, hour, humble, humor*, and their compounds, are the only words pronounced without commencing with aspiration.

In teaching Spelling, the Instructor ought, invariably, to assign a *reason* for every departure from what is usually called a *general rule*, and take good care that the Child *apprehends* the reason; for instance —

Words ending with *single e* are spelled without the *e* when *ing* is added to the word; as *blame* *blaming*, *conduce* *conducting*, *enunciate* *enunciating*: to which there are 8 Exceptions — *dye dyeing, eye eyeing, hoe hoeing, shoe shoeing, singe singeing, swinge swingeing, springe springeing, hinge hingeing*.

When we shall have progressed a little farther and shall have shaken off the shackles of *authorities*, we shall have many Rules without Exceptions; such as —

Words ending with 2 consonants, or 1 consonant preceded by 2 vowels, never double the last consonant on adding *ed, er* or *ing*; as *contract* *contracted* *contracter* *contracting*, *detain* *detained* *detainer* *detaining*.

Words of more than one syllable, ending with one consonant, preceded by one vowel, without any accent on the last syllable, never double the last consonant on adding *ed er* or *ing*; as *càvil* *càviled* *càviler* *càviling*, *wòrship* *wòrshipped* *wòrshiper* *wòrshipping*: but, when the last syllable is accentuated, then, the last consonant must be doubled; as *propèl* *propèlled* *propèller* *propèlling*, *regrèt* *regrètted* *regrètter* *regrètting*.

A plain English scholar, one who has not had what is termed a *learned* education, is often at a loss *how* to Spell the simplest words in his Mother-tongue *so as to please the Eye* of a Latin, Greek, or Hebrew scholar. Printers, all over the country, can testify, that Writers of clever works (perplexed with our anomalies) *request*, as a favor, that the Corrector of the Press *will have the goodness to attend to the Spelling!* Now, is this creditable to a Language which we wish to be thought *highly cultivated*? that Englishmen who have reached the very first rank in Arts and Sciences, should be unable to *Correct their own proofs*? Is there, then, a *something* so peculiarly abstruse or recondite in Spelling, that an Englishman whose intellects have penetrated into the profoundest depths of Philosophy, should meet with *incomprehensibles* in Spelling the mere words of compositions which inform, enlighten, improve, irradiate the minds of his readers? Surely, there must be a Cause and a Cure for this deficiency in the ablest minds — Who can help us to the discovery?

I open Johnson, at random, when my eye falls on  
 INSTITUTE [*instituto*, *institutum*, Latin; *instituer*, French]  
 and Englishman-like I expect to find *instituter* formed from  
*institute*; the addition of an *r* being the simplest and most  
 natural way of Spelling the word; but, instead of *instituter*,  
 I see

INSTITUTOR [*instituteur*, French; *institutor*, Latin] An estab-  
 lisher; one who settles; instructor; educator.

I should have thought that the proper way of Spelling these  
 3 additional words would have been — establish, *establisher*,  
 instruct *instructor*, educate *educater*. Why should I write  
 teach, *teacher*, and not instruct, *instructor*? Does Johnson  
 assign any reason? let us see, for *instruct* is the very next  
 word in his Dictionary — What do I see! who could have  
 expected it! there really stands in plain type,

INSTRUCTOR [from *instruct*]

notwithstanding He has but just before Spelled the word  
*instructor*! And now, I must assure my readers, *from ex-*  
*amination*, that such inconsistencies abound in the very  
 work, which such short-sighted instructors as Lindley  
 Murray, would adopt as a STANDARD. Out upon all such  
 standardships and nonsense! My fellow countrymen,  
 “Dare to have sense yourselves.”

Naught that is *right*, think *little*; well aware,

What Reason bids, God bids.

YOUNG.

In 1854, there is not a Printing-office in the land that  
 does not issue palpable blunders, from not having a few  
 plain Rules free of all Exceptions, for the Spelling of words  
 — but, Patience! we have progressed wonderfully during  
 the past 100 years, and that very progression is a prelude,  
 a promise, an assurance, that a thousand inconsistencies of  
 today, shall be numbered among *the things that were*, be-  
 fore the expiration of another century!

“Time is the nurse and breeder of all Good.”





The various opinions on the writing  
of the master spirit The immortal in  
are innumerable, and, for the most part  
a combined muddle, they clearly seem  
and thereby make "bad worse" to use an  
old observation, no two men ever he  
precisely the same views with respect  
to him nor do I think his greatest de  
vils ever be penetrated unless by con  
vivial spirit, that time and paper  
has been expended and still is ex  
pended and ever will be so I doubt,  
and all to little purpose the  
most learned oft times give but a weak  
Key where with to unlock this master  
lock, which, having lost the master  
Key remains unlockable and I fe  
ar will so.

'Much ado about nothing' may  
truly form the motto of the in  
evitable.  
"Citrono Cash."













